Film QUARTERLY

INDEX TO VOLUME XXXVI

Titles of books and films reviewed appear in *italics*. First reference number indicates volume number, second indicates issue number, third indicates page. Major topics are also indexed.

Allen, Woody. 36:4:42
Altering Eye, The. 36:4:31
Animation, history of. 36:4:60
Antonioni, Michelangelo [interview]. 36:4:1
Antonioni's Visual Language. 36:4:50
Atomic Cafe. 36:3:51
Aufderheide, Pat. *Brazilian Cinema.* 36:4:63
_____. *Zoot Suit.* 36:2:44
Babenco, Hector [interview]. 36:1:2
Bachmann, Gideon. A Love of Today: An Interview with Michelangelo Antonioni. 36:4:1
_____. Man of Heart: Andrzej Wajda [interview]. 36:2:2
Barbarosa. 36:2:52
Bartholomew, David. *The Long Good Friday.* 36:1:50
Before Mickey. 36:4:60
Before the Nickelodeon. 36:4:21
Bergman, Ingmar. 36:4:40, 36:4:44
Bernardoni, James. *George Cukor.* 36:4:49
Bertolt Brecht, Cahiers du Cinéma, *and Contemporary Film Theory.* 36:4:32
Blade Runner. 36:2:33
Bock, Audie. *Currents in Japanese Cinema.* 36:4:35
_____. *The Japanese Film* (rev. ed.). 36:4:59
Brazilian Cinema. 36:4:62
Brunette, Peter. *Bertolt Brecht.* Cahiers du Cinéma *and Contemporary Film Theory.* 36:4:32
_____. *Profane Mythology.* 36:4:30
_____. Vittorio Taviani: An Interview. 36:3:2
But We Need the Eggs. 36:4:42
Callenbach, Ernest. Editor's Notebook. See each issue.
_____. *Eisenstein at Work.* 36:4:43
_____. *The Japanese Movie.* 36:4:65
_____. *Women on Film.* 36:4:33
Chatman, Seymour. *Antonioni's Visual Language.* 36:4:50
Cinema and Sentiment. 36:4:28
Claude Lelouche, Film Director. 36:4:43
Confessions of a Feminist Porn Watcher. 36:3:10
Controversy & Correspondence. See each issue.
Csicsery, George. Individual Solutions: An Interview with Hector Babenco. 36:1:2
Currents in Japanese Cinema. 36:4:35
Dark Side of the Screen, The: Film Noir. 36:4:55
de Antonio, Emile. Emile de Antonio Interviews Himself: *In the King of Prussia.* 36:1:28
Dempsey, Michael. *Blade Runner.* 36:2:33
Desowitz, Bill. *Kubrick.* 36:4:48
Desser, David. *Peckinpah: A Portrait in Montage.* 36:4:51
Diva. 36:3:59
Documentary Films. 36:3:17, 36:3:30
Doherty, Tom. *For One Week Only.* 36:4:57
Durgnat, Raymond. *Psychoanalysis and Cinema.* 36:2:58
Editor's Notebook. See each issue.
Eisenstein at Work. 36:4:43
Emile de Antonio Interviews Himself: *In the King of Prussia.* 36:1:28
Ethnographic film. 36:3:30
Fell, John. *Before the Nickelodeon.* 36:4:21
_____. *History of Bourgeois Perception.* 36:1:60
_____. *Sound and the Cinema.* 36:4:60
Figures of Desire: A Theory and Analysis of Surrealist Film. 36:3:60
Film books [yearly survey]. 36:4:25
Film history. 36:4:21
Film noir. 36:4:55
Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet, The. 36:4:39
Fischer, Lucy. Mr. Dummar Comes to Town: An Analysis of *Melvin and Howard.* 36:1:32
5001 Nights at the Movies. 36:4:31
For One Week Only. 36:4:57
François Truffaut, A Guide to References and Resources. 36:4:51
Gado, Frank. *Ingmar Bergman and the Ritual of Art.* 36:4:45
Gaggi, Silvio. *Figures of Desire: A Theory and Analysis of Surrealist Film.* 36:3:60
Gaughn, Michael J. *Time Bandits.* 36:1:41
Genette, Gerard. 36:4:4
George Cukor. 36:4:49
Glass, Fred. *Atomic Cafe.* 36:3:51
Greenberg, Dan. Controversy and Correspondence. 36:4:65
_____. *Hollywood's Image of the Jew.* 36:4:61
_____. The Reference Shelf Shuffle. 36:2:5
Hawks, Howard. 36:4:45
Henderson, Brian. Tense, Mood, and Voice in Film. 36:4:4
_____. *The Last New Wave.* 35:3:59
_____. *Lili Marleen.* 35:2:42
Hertzog, John T. *The World According to Garp.* 36:2:39
Hill, Walter. 36:1:20
History of Bourgeois Perception. 36:1:60
Hitchcock, Alfred. Sound tracks of. 36:4:52
Hogue, Peter. *The Dark Side of the Screen: Film Noir.* 36:4:56
_____. *Radio On.* 36:2:47
Hollywood Musical, The. 36:4:54
Hollywood's Image of the Jew. 36:4:61
Howard Hawks, Storyteller. 36:4:45
Human Artifice and the Science Fiction Film. 36:3:44
Identification of a Woman. 36:4:1
Ideology and the Image. 36:1:59
Individual Solutions: An Interview with Hector Babenco. 36:1:2
Ingmar Bergman: A Critical Biography. 36:4:40
Ingmar Bergman and the Ritual of Art. 36:4:44
J.D. Film, The. 36:4:56
Jacques Tati: A Guide to References and Resources. 36:4:51
Jaehne, Karen. *The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet.* 36:4:40
_____. *Lewis Milestone.* 36:2:55
_____. *Lindsay Anderson, Sydney Pollack* and *John Schlesinger.* 36:1:56
_____. *Samuel Goldwyn.* 36:2:55
Jaffe, Alan. *Something Like an Autobiography.* 36:4:25
James Whale. 36:4:42
Japanese Film, The (rev. ed.). 36:4:59
Jetée, La. 36:1:15
Japanese Movie, The (rev. ed.). 36:4:65

John Schlesinger. 36:1:56
Johnson, William. *Keep Watching the Skies!* 36:4:58
Kauffman, Stanley. [Reply to Greenberg]. 36:4:65
Kawin, Bruce. *Howard Hawks, Storyteller*. 36:4:45
_____. *The Movies in Our Midst*. 36:4:64
_____. *Raymond Chandler and Film*. 36:4:32
_____. Time and Stasis in *La Jetée*. 36:1:15
Keep Watching the Skies! 36:4:58
Kinder, Marsha. *Ingmar Bergman*. 36:4:40
King of Comedy, The. 36:4:17
Koenig, Vivian. *The J.D. Films*. 36:4:56
Kubrick. 36:4:48
Lewis Milestone. 36:2:55
Lindsay Anderson. 36:1:56
The Long Good Friday. 36:1:50
The Long Raiders. 36:1:20
Love of Today, A. Interview with Michelangelo Antonioni. 36:4:1
MacBean, James Roy. *Two Laws* from Australia, One White, One Black. 36:3:30
MacDonald, Scott. Confessions of a Feminist Porn Watcher. 36:3:10
Man, Randolph. *The RKO Story*. 36:4:62
Man of Heart: Andrzej Wajda. 36:2:2
Melvin and Howard. 36:1:32
Movies in Our Midst, The. 36:4:64
Movies Plus One. 36:4:34
Mr. Dummar Comes to Town: An Analysis of *Melvin and Howard*. 36:1:32
Narrative theory. 36:4:4
Nichols, Bill. The Origin of Ideas. 36:3:62
_____. The Voice of Documentary. 36:3:17
The Paradoxes of Home: Three Films by Walter Hill. 36:1:20
Peckinpah: A Portrait in Montage. 36:4:51
Polt, Harriet. *But We Need the Eggs*. 36:4:42
Pornographic films. 36:3:10
Profane Mythology. 36:4:30
Psychoanalysis and Cinema. 36:2:58
Quart, Barbara and Leonard. *Three Brothers*. 36:1:53
Radio On. 36:2:47
Rafferty, Terrence. *Barbarosa*. 36:2:52
_____. The Paradoxes of Home: Three Films by Walter Hill. 36:1:20
RKO Story, The. 36:4:62
Raymond Chandler and Film. 36:4:32
Reference Shelf Shuffle, The. 36:2:5
Robert Bresson: A Guide to References and Resources. 36:4:51
Rosenbaum, Jonathan. *François Truffaut, Jacques Tati, Robert Bresson* [combined book review]. 36:4:51
_____. *The Hollywood Musical*. 36:4:54
Samuel Goldwyn. 36:2:55
Science fiction films. 36:3:44
Sikov, Ed. *The King of Comedy*. 36:4:17
_____. *Victor/Victoria*. 36:1:46
The Silent Scream. 36:4:52
Slow Fade to Afro: The Black Presence in Brazilian Cinema. 36:2:16
Sobchack, Vivian. *Movies Plus One*. 36:4:34
Something Like an Autobiography. 36:4:25
Sound and the Cinema. 36:4:60
Southern Comfort. 36:1:20
Stam, Robert. Slow Fade to Afro: The Black Presence in Brazilian Cinema. 36:2:16
Sydney Pollack. 36:1:56
Taviano, Vittorio [interview]. 36:3:2
Telotte, J. P. Human Artifice and the Science Fiction Film. 36:3:44
Tense, Mood, and Voice in Film. 36:4:4
Three Brothers. 36:1:53
Time and Stasis in *La Jetée*. 36:1:15
Time Bandits. 36:1:41
Two Laws from Australia: One White, One Black. 36:3:30
Victor/Victoria. 36:1:46
Vittorio Taviani [interview]. 36:3:2
Voice of Documentary, The. 36:3:17
Wajda, Andrzej [interview]. 36:2:2
Walters, Gordon. *Claude Lelouche, Film Director*. 36:4:43
Warriors, The. 36:1:20
What's Wrong with This Picture. 36:3:63
Williams, Alan. *The Silent Scream: Hitchcock's Sound Track*. 36:4:52
Williams, Linda. *Cinema and Sentiment*. 36:4:28
Willis, Don. *James Whale*. 36:4:42
Women on Film. 36:4:33
World According to Garp, The. 36:2:39
Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud. *Diva*. 36:3:59
Ziolkowski, Fabrice. *Before Mickey*. 36:4:60
_____. *Ideology and the Image*. 36:1:59
_____. What's Wrong with This Picture. 36:3:63

VOLUME XXXVI, No. 4 Summer 1983

INTERVIEW

A Love of Today: An Interview with Michelangelo Antonioni GIDEON BACHMANN 1

The director of *Identification of a Woman* talks about suffering, control, and the decline of passion.

ARTICLE

Tense, Mood and Voice in Film (Notes After Genette) BRIAN HENDERSON 4

How an influential French study of narrative modes can be applied to film forms with their multi-channel textuality.

REVIEWS

The King of Comedy ED SIKOV 17

Scorsese's analytic comedy about images that are both highly manipulative and out of control, a tale of obsession and hysteria austerely told.

Before the Nickelodeon: The Early Cinema of Edwin Porter JOHN FELL 21

Charles Musser uses film to do film history: tracing the origins of standard film syntax in a witty, loving and evocative assemblage of films like *How They Do Things on the Bowery* (1902).

SPECIAL FEATURE:

The Year's Film Books

Once again we survey the outpouring of film titles in the past year. This issue contains the following categories (the remainder will appear in the Fall issue):

Autobiographies and Biographies	25
Criticism	28
Director Studies	39
Genre Studies	54
History	59

CONTROVERSY & CORRESPONDENCE 65

Stanley Kauffman and Dan Greenberg exchange blows on the acceptance of inadequate reference works.

COVER: From Martin Scorsese's *The King of Comedy* (Twentieth Century-Fox). See review on page 17.

Editor's Notebook

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GIDEON BACHMANN

A Love of Today

AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI

Unless you count *The Mystery of Oberwald,* a television experiment based on Cocteau's *The Eagle with Two Heads,* which Antonioni shot for Italian TV three years ago, more of a challenge than a success, it has been exactly 20 years since he has made a film in his native Italy. Now, with *Identification of a Woman,* he has not only returned home, but has also taken up again a subject that was at the center of his best Italian work in the past: the infinite pitfalls of man-woman relationships. Of course, he won't readily admit to this simplification: the film is the story of a man—a film director, in fact—who seeks a woman to play a character in a film, and in the process imposes his own fantasies upon the women he meets. Or does he? The dialectic of the film is precisely this: to what extent does his camera document and to what extent does it invent?

ANTONIONI: I do not believe in autobiography, but every feature film is also, more or less, a documentary. That is, when it's a film on a contemporary subject.

BACHMANN: *Is love the contemporary story documented in this one?*

Let's say that there is love in the film, but it is a contemporary love, a love of today. A love for which a man who has two disappointments in a row doesn't tear his hair out, doesn't despair like one used to. He has a mature capacity for suffering, but he controls and in the end dominates it. He has learned to control his feelings and sentiments, especially within the framework of his craft which has taught him to hold back narrative flights of fancy.

So you think making a fuss about love is old-fashioned?

Let's say it's historical. It's part of other times, of past literature and of past art, past cinema, past theatre. There is something, for example, in an Ibsen play seen today, which is untenable, there is a distance emanating from *Ghosts* seen today. I am trying to stay away from making generalizations, and want to concentrate on characters I see; and it is in this sense that I am saying what I am saying, not in a sociological sense. The characters are autonomous; I am only the author, as Pirandello says. Despite what has been said about me, I never identify with my films. It is true that I am emotionally involved with them, but only to the extent that I observe them with the emotion derived of the distance which "narrating" implies. But since your question was addressed to me in a more general way, I admit to believing that nineteenth-century passion today arouses only smiles.

So when you say "control" and "domination" you feel that these are, in a man relating to a woman, achievements?

Certainly. And in a world where we are daily bombarded with catastrophic news and stimuli, the ability to restrain one's emotions becomes essential. In fact, we accept too much: especially in Italy—the Mafia, terrorists, disorder, anarchy—and in the end, without inner control, we might disintegrate. Control becomes a habit. A way of life, maybe the only one.

It could appear that in saying that you imply that your film-making has no participating function; that you only document the descent to restraint.

I don't like to talk in terms of "function." I have difficulty, anyway, to observe myself as a film-maker from the outside. As I am having difficulty, and you can see that, in talking intimately about myself. I actually hate doing it. An artist—in Proust's definition —may be a man ahead of his time, but the man behind the work may not be as far ahead.

Still you are indicating that restraint is being "ahead." While your film, in showing how couples are no longer able to properly relate, seems to say the opposite: that this modern restraint is rather an expression of poverty, a pity.

IDENTIFICATION OF A WOMAN

Of course, the passing of anything is always a pity. It's like pollution: if our organism won't adapt to the new, polluted environment, mortality will increase. And like our organism, so our psyche needs to adjust to new times in order to survive. And in fact, death is only a growing statistical hypothesis. But it is something that I, for one, refuse to accept, and thus life articulates itself in a long series of adjustments which we end up calling "modern."

Is Identification of a Woman, *then, a film about the modern psyche? I noted, for example, that you devote extreme care to sound, something unusual in Italy, and something habitually considered a psychological medium rather than a rational one like the image.*

I do not make this distinction. Hearing and seeing are both "direct" senses; I do not believe either needs mediation. Not like literature that requires a mind. In film, the sound has various dimensions: the effects and noise-recordings are direct, but human voices need interpretation. They are ambiguous and insecure, but voices are the only vehicle we have for comprehension. So they need mediation, orchestration. That's acting. It relates the characters to the world.

Do the two women in your film represent two different worlds?

I had not intended it this way. I know this is a possible interpretation: one from a more aristocratic stratum of society, contesting her origins, trying to make a new life for herself without knowing what this new life may be, and the other a woman who works, who has a sort of place in society and has achieved more of an identity. Thus their problems are not equal. And their behavior, for example in sex, is different.

How is this expressed through the sexual scenes in the film?

It is here, in sex, that the first woman, instinctively, finds herself. That's why the sexual scenes with her are so *osé,* so daring, because they are the most salient parts of the narrative tissue within which this girl moves. They represent a logical development of her personality. Her sex activity is a liberating act. It is here she becomes herself.

You mean the other woman doesn't "need" it in the same way?

The other woman is already herself in her work. It is this second woman who is the saner, more human, even if simpler one. And she is simpler because she has a content in her life.

Are you indicating that the seeking of self-realization through sex is a neurotic approach, juxtaposed to the sane approach of doing it through work?

It is sure that the first is more neurotic. That is also a result of her social station and the environment within which she has lived. And thus of her nature. While trying to liberate herself of these ties she remains part of them. Ties which are expressed in gestures, words, acts, encounters. Take the party, where she moves like in a ballet within this world made up of counts, dukes, princes and the black aristocracy, where there isn't a single object that isn't authentic. She moves at ease within these walls made up of ancient leather wallpaper.

Is the self-liberation through sex within the range of habits of this crowd?

Even hiding it is part of their reality. But remember that I said it was only one way in which the two characters of the women could be interpreted. In creating characters I do not want to plan concepts.

What about the man, then? Does he typify anything?

Well, he typifies the men who exercise that profession and who are of that particular age, which I know, more or less, because while we are all different, we do share that common denominator of being always in search of characters, of themes, of ideas, of stories. It's a common concern. But this business of "typifying" is *a posteriori:* once the film is

IDENTIFICATION OF A WOMAN

made you can read those things into it, if you feel the need to do it. I don't. I am not that keen to give my characters a definite ideological position. Imagine all the brakes I would have to apply: instead of utilizing my visual stimuli I'd have to think in terms of translating concepts. I work through inventions and intuitions, which are not necessarily linked to a predetermined dialectic.

Does this put you in the camp of those who now, after so many years of the opposite, defend the view that engagement, in the existential sense, is something of the past?

You could put it like that, if you want. We live in a period of what in Italy is called "riflusso," a reaction against pure social engagement. But of course I didn't make the film just to express this.

Leaving it open like that, and having said what you've said about love, is it maybe you, the thing that is "typified" by the male protagonist?

I do not believe that biography manifests itself through the telling of facts that have more or less occurred to one. In fact, to be more precise: the facts that occur in the life of this film director have not occurred in mine. A film is, or becomes, autobiographical in the degree that it is authentic. By that I mean that it is individually yours, tells a story in the way you want to tell it. It becomes part of you because of it being you who are doing it, your way. For example: in the morning, going to the set, I don't usually have clear ideas; I prefer getting there and finding that I have to resolve a certain situation and then doing it in the way it feels, starting from a virginal point. Everything that happens to me that morning—the things I see on the road, the light, the clouds, an item in the paper, a voice I overhear—all these condition me and transform me and eventually become part of that day's shooting, making it individual. What's important is who I am in the moment of shooting. That's where it becomes "autobiographical."

That would mean that your film turns out to be different from the script?

Very much so. If you compare the result with the intent you will find there is hardly a line that hasn't changed. But I do not notice this much during the shooting because I never read the script. I have the feeling of knowing it by heart but actually it is the film I know by heart and not that first version of it which was written down before the work starts.

Are you happy with the result, then?

I don't know yet, and may not know for years. When I think back to my other films, they keep changing. For example, my "favorite" isn't always the same one. It depends, again, on the experiences I have, the man I am at the moment. How I feel about the things that a film includes and how they concern me now.

You have always been concerned with the couple. In that sense, this film continues a prior engagement.

Probably. But in a developing way. Towards a view of today, a contemporary one.

Couldn't one say, in effect, that the red line of your film making has been the documenting of this development in an ever more contemporary fashion?

Actually I am quite tired of it. I don't want to be telling the same stories or dealing with the same theme. In fact, my next film will be a very different venture. It will take place mostly at sea, it will be made in America again, and there will be sudden disappearances . . . but it will not deal with a man-woman relationship. There will be interactions between men, but not on a sexual level. It is about the possibility of living together, about possessiveness, about envy, the envy a man can feel for other ways of life.

Do you sometimes have such feelings?

Yes. Also because often, even without admitting it or doing it consciously, a man thinks back upon his own life and makes his reckoning. These are natural examinations that one undertakes, and inevitably certain things in your past don't exactly please you totally. It doesn't necessarily happen often—to me it occurs very infrequently—but when it does, one gets the feeling of there having been other possibilities. On the other hand, the past is a cadaver. Experience is a limited tool only. Also, it can make you sterile or distract you. I really believe that one must annihilate experience. Get free of it. Otherwise it lures you, ties your hands, makes you a victim of false promises. It robs you of that instinctiveness which to me is the most beautiful thing in human behavior.

Recorded in Rome on July 22nd, 1982. Copyright © 1982 by Gideon Bachmann.

BRIAN HENDERSON

Tense, Mood, and Voice in Film

(Notes after Genette)

*Narrative Discourse** is a translation of "Discours du recit," which is the major part of *Figure III* (1972) by Gerard Genette. Genette's topics are traditional ones of literary theory and criticism: order, duration, frequency, mood, and voice in classical fiction and the subversion of these in modern texts. Genette offers no new method of literary analysis but a clarification, systematization, and extension of older ones, amounting to a transformation of them. The book is immensely stimulating and has already been quite influential.

Aside from a reference or two, Genette does not treat film, and his work cannot be directly applied to film. Each of his categories must be

**Narrative Discourse, An Essay in Method,* translated by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell, 1980). *Figures of Literary Discourse,* translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) comprises translations of Genette essays from *Figure I* (1966), *Figure II* (1969), and an additional essay from *Figure III.* See also Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1978), especially pp. 63-79.

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Yes. Also because often, even without admitting it or doing it consciously, a man thinks back upon his own life and makes his reckoning. These are natural examinations that one undertakes, and inevitably certain things in your past don't exactly please you totally. It doesn't necessarily happen often—to me it occurs very infrequently—but when it does, one gets the feeling of there having been other possibilities. On the other hand, the past is a cadaver. Experience is a limited tool only. Also, it can make you sterile or distract you. I really believe that one must annihilate experience. Get free of it. Otherwise it lures you, ties your hands, makes you a victim of false promises. It robs you of that instinctiveness which to me is the most beautiful thing in human behavior.

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BRIAN HENDERSON

Tense, Mood, and Voice in Film

(Notes after Genette)

*Narrative Discourse** is a translation of "Discours du recit," which is the major part of *Figure III* (1972) by Gerard Genette. Genette's topics are traditional ones of literary theory and criticism: order, duration, frequency, mood, and voice in classical fiction and the subversion of these in modern texts. Genette offers no new method of literary analysis but a clarification, systematization, and extension of older ones, amounting to a transformation of them. The book is immensely stimulating and has already been quite influential.

Aside from a reference or two, Genette does not treat film, and his work cannot be directly applied to film. Each of his categories must be

**Narrative Discourse, An Essay in Method,* translated by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell, 1980). *Figures of Literary Discourse,* translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) comprises translations of Genette essays from *Figure I* (1966), *Figure II* (1969), and an additional essay from *Figure III.* See also Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1978), especially pp. 63-79.

rethought on the ground of film analysis, a project whose value is argued below.

What does *Narrative Discourse* do? It studies Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* and it studies narrative discourse; it is at once the criticism of one text and a theory of narrative. To do both without subordinating one to the other is a paradox; but it permits "a refreshing rotation and mutual entertainment between theoretical dryness and critical meticulousness." Genette compares the project to an insomniac turning over and over in search of a better position.

His study of narrative discourse is limited to the narrative text itself. He does not compare the *Recherche* to actual events, as one might a history, nor to the circumstances of its production, as might a biography of Proust. Rather he addresses the relationship between a narrative discourse and the events that it recounts and the relationship between the discourse and the act that produces it. But it is the narrative discourse alone that informs us both of the events that it recounts and of the activity that supposedly gave birth to it. Genette distinguishes three aspects of narrative reality within the narrative text: *story* refers to the narrative content, that is, to the chronological order of events implied by the narrative; *narrative* refers to the narrative discourse or text; *narrating* refers to the producing narrative action.

Having made these distinctions, Genette turns to method. Since any narrative is a linguistic production, telling of one or several events, he argues that it is legitimate to treat it as the development given to a verbal form, in the grammatical sense of the term: the expansion of a verb. "*I walk, Pierre has come* are for me the minimal forms of narrative, and inversely the *Odyssey* or the *Recherche* is only, in a certain way, the amplification (in the rhetorical sense) of statements such as *Ulysses comes home to Ithaca* or *Marcel becomes a writer.*" This perhaps authorizes us to formulate the problems of analyzing narrative discourse according to categories borrowed from the grammar of verbs. Genette reduces these to three basic classes of determination: tense, mood, and voice. Tense, which includes order, duration, and frequency, has to do with temporal relations between narrative and story. Mood has to do with the modalities, i.e., the forms and degrees of narrative representation. Voice has to do with the mode of action of the verb in its relations with the subject of the statement, not an actual writer or speaker, but the subject of the enunciating itself; more broadly, it has to do with what Genette calls the narrative situation and its two protagonists: the narrator and his audience, real or implied. These terms are borrowed from the grammar of verbs for narrative analysis; Genette claims no rigorous homology between the two instances.

To study the tense of a narrative is first of all to compare the order in which events are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession these events have in the story. Types of order include straight chronology and anachronies, a general name for deviations from straight chronological order. Anachronous narratives begin, in one way or another, *in medias res* then go backwards (analepses) or, much less frequently, forwards (prolepses). Analepses are external when their entire extent happens before the beginning of the first narrative, commonly used to give background to the present action. They are internal when they fill in gaps occurring later than the start of the novel. There are also lateral ellipses, in which the narrative sidesteps an element within a chronological passage. Genette calls this paralipsis, ellipsis to the side; like a temporal ellipsis it may be filled in later.

It is not difficult to apply Genette's basic concepts of order to cinema. It seems that the majority of films of every era have been told in straight chronological order whereas, according to Genette, such order is the exception among novels. Prolepses are relatively rare in the novel but they are even rarer in cinema. Flashforwards are sometimes used by Resnais and Roeg, on the whole integrally to their projects; in some sixties and early seventies films they were used rather unsystematically as instances of "mind" or "cinema" or both, e.g., *Easy Rider.*

Anachronies in cinema come down mainly to analepses. Such figures are extremely rare in the first twenty years of film history, although one does find there dreams, visions, and even "reviews" of material shown earlier in some sequels, episodes of serials, etc. In *Broken Blossoms* (1919), Griffith introduces

Battling Burrows then flashes back to his recent victory in the ring to explain his bad temper at having to keep in training; he introduces Lucy then flashes back to her encounters with a weary wife and with some prostitutes to show the options that hem her in. In the manner of classical fiction, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) casts its main story as a long analepsis inside a framing story set in the present; but like *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961), this "past" may be delusional and therefore the "remembering" itself a strictly present action. Victor Sjöstrom's *The Phantom Chariot* (1920) exhibits a remarkable mastery of cinematic tenses, at one point presenting a flashback within a flashback.

LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD

The greatest period for analepsis in classical cinema was undoubtedly 1941–1957, that maturity of the sound film marked by *Citizen Kane* (1941) and *How Green Was My Valley* (1941). The latter begins with an older Huw leaving the valley and remembering it as it was; the rest of the film presents that remembering and never returns to the framing story, recurring at the end to memory images from the early part of the analepsis iteself, in a kind of looping of the past. More usual is the analeptic structure of *All About Eve* (1950), which returns to the framing story at the end and carries it forward for an additional scene or two. *Citizen Kane, Double Indemnity* (1944), and *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) follow this pattern, as indeed do most analeptic films of the classical period.

Analepses in the cinema have nearly always involved the use of language, sometimes explicit dialogue setting up a return to the past, more often the direct intervention of language in the form of titles or voice-over. Without such linguistic cues, and quite often with them, analepses in classical cinema are usually marked redundantly by plot, indirect dialogue, music (dreamlike or "mental"), and optical devices such as blurs, rippling, fades, or dissolves. Classical cinema reacts to a tense shift as though to a cataclysm; the viewer must be warned at every level of cinematic expression, in sounds, in images, and in written language, lest he/she be disoriented.

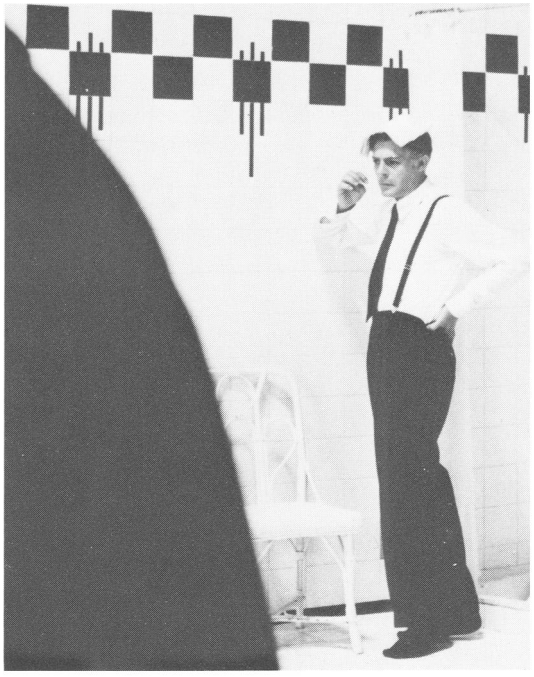
Why is this? Cinema has no built-in tense system as language does. One cannot write a sentence without indicating tense but one can apparently make a shot, and therefore perhaps a film, without indicating tense. In written discourse the tense structure must be renewed with every sentence and, concomitantly, a single sentence may subvert that structure; Genette pauses over the tense structure of several individual sentences by Proust and their implications for the narrative as a whole. In the cinema, one is tempted to say, if the camera keeps running or if there is a cut to another angle within the scene, continuous temporality is the result; the cut to another sequence is read as straight chronological order, unless otherwise marked. One must do something, indeed a great deal, if a comprehensible shift of tenses is to be achieved in cinema. So, at any rate, classical cinema has persuaded us by making straight chronological order seem natural and inevitable. Cinema, unlike language, is, in Barthes's terms, a "complex system in which different substances are engaged," in which "the senses are subjected to the concerted action of a collection of images, sounds, and written words." Language need only change a word-ending to indicate tense shifts, cinema must pass from one complex conjunction of communication channels to another and provide a plausible transition between them, all without an explicit tense system.

This is one reason why films like *Wild Strawberries* (1957) and *8½* (1963) made such an impact when they appeared and have had such influence. They went back and forth between past and present without explicit linguistic cuing and with a subtlety as to other signals that made the old ways seem heavy-handed. These films seemed to abolish the rhetoric of

tense shifts in cinema; in fact they substituted new rhetorics for old. *8½* in particular convinced viewers that it had achieved the seamless interaction between past and present that it had aimed for. Any spoken version of "I remember" would have defeated the film's psychological subtlety and cinematic fluidity. But other, well-hidden signals prepare the audience for tense shifts and guide it back smoothly. These include the context of setting and plot and Fellini's isolation of Guido by reframing or character movement just before a return to the past. There are also at times different optical treatment of past and present, wind sounds, fading of present voices, etc. Rota's music is used to bridge time shifts expertly as is Mastroianni's detachment and bemusement, his inwardness amidst public scenes, slight modulations of which carry him (and us) from something in the present to something in the past. He is passive yet alert to his own visions, as though receiving them from outside and shaping them at the same time. Indeed Fellini brings in a pair of mind-readers to keep his hero from introducing the past on his own ("Asa Nisi Masa").

Certain films undermine our ability to distinguish analepses from straight chronological order and thereby subvert narrative order itself. These include works by Buñuel, Duras, and Rainer, not to mention the semi-narrative films of the avant-garde. Made well before *Marienbad*—and more lucidly—Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) tempts us to discover a single narrative order; our effort is necessary to the film's operation but is of course doomed to fail.

Perhaps the most formidable subversion of order specifically, of order as order, is *Not Reconciled* (1965) by Jean-Marie Straub, an adaptation of Heinrich Böll's long *Billiards at Half-Past Nine* (1962) into a 53-minute film. The story deals with three generations of a Cologne family and the resistance of some of its members to militarism in World War I, in the thirties, and in the postwar period in which it is set; it all takes place on Heinrich Fähmel's eightieth birthday, a *Ulysses*-like day on which various characters remember the past. Straub actually straightens out the novel's jumbling of the events of the day and eliminates most of its flashbacks. Nevertheless the film is vastly harder to follow than the novel



Mastroianni as Guido in 8½

because Straub has omitted most of the signals that cue viewers as to time shifts.* He uses straight cuts to go to the past and to return; there are no optical devices and no music cues. Voice-over is used for the past material itself, but not to bridge present-past shifts. Plot context and period detail are probably what viewers most rely upon to construct the narrative order of a work. Here too Straub withholds orientation: he makes his thirties shots and his fifties shots virtually indistinguishable in dress, environment, gestures, mode of speech, etc., which is also a thematic statement. (Some of the World War I-era shots have period flavor.) Also, there is never enough context provided to know with certainty which shots belong to which period, let alone how the various events depicted relate to one another. It is only upon multiple screenings or

*The film begins with a three-second shot of a man playing billiards, saying to a bellboy, "Tell me what, boy?", which is followed by eight shots with voice-over concerning boys involved in political conflicts at a high school. Then there is a shot of the billiard player ordering a cognac and five shots of the bellboy going to get it, including two flashbacks concerning his life at the hotel. A shot back in the billiard room, in which the bellboy asks if there is more to the story, is followed by twelve more shots, with voice-over, of one of the schoolboys being beaten, being smuggled out of the country, etc. At this point, less than seven minutes into the film, first- and even second-time viewers have no idea where they are and have no way to regain their footing for the rest of the film. For a fuller treatment, see Richard Roud, *Jean-Marie Straub* (New York: Viking, 1972), which remains the best introduction to its subject.

upon reading about the film, or both, that we realize that some of the characters are the same characters at different ages; there are two Roberts, two Schrellas, two Johannas, and two Heinrichs. Most remarkable of all is the temporal coherence of *Not Reconciled* when one has studied it carefully. Its order is straight chronology with three major analepses (Robert's two-part story of the thirties and Heinrich's story of 1910–1918) and two minor ones (Hugo the bellboy's life at the hotel). Straub is right in calling it a simple film but it takes a great deal of work to understand that.

All of our examples, from Griffith to Straub, have stayed within Genette's basic categories of straight chronology and analepsis. It is notable that he himself does not stay within these simple concepts. Thus he finds in Proust "repeating prolepses" (playing a role of advance notice), "prolepsis on analepsis," "analepsis on prolepsis," "analepsis on paralipsis," etc. Our discussions indicate that cinema has not (yet) developed the complexity of tense structures found in literary works. They also indicate that in cinema analysis the interesting questions have to do not with narrative order itself, but with *how* films indicate this order, both straight chronology and deviations from it.

For Genette, duration is a more difficult question than that of order or frequency because the time needed to read a text depends upon factors external to it. There is no "normal" reading speed so one cannot pose a hypothetical equality between narrative time and story time, against which to measure variations. One can, however, compare parts of the narrative discourse to each other to determine their *relative* speeds. This method applies only to the large narrative articulations of a work and not to detailed studies of rhythm, which, Genette notes, would lack rigor. Thus he divides Proust's text according to its principal temporal and spatial breaks, determines the number of pages devoted to each, and dates these sections by the story time they cover. He then expresses these findings in an overall ratio: the Combray episode devotes 140 pages to ten years, the Gilberte episode devotes 200 pages to two years, etc. On the basis of this table Genette assigns a range of variations to the Proustian text: from 150 pages for three hours to three lines for twelve years. He also notes a durational evolution in the overall text: a gradual slowing of the narrative through longer and longer scenes and a corresponding increase in the number and length of ellipses between such scenes. Genette calls such variations of speed, which all narratives have, anisochronies or effects of rhythm.

Films, of course, have fixed viewing times. One may compare a length of film, measured in minutes and seconds or in feet, to a portion of story, or vice versa, and one may assemble these findings in an exact table. One may examine the large narrative articulations of a whole film or the microrhythms of very short passages. Genette's account of duration does not enlarge these methodological options; he is dealing with a less exact case. But by making the question of duration newly interesting, he provides new motivation to make such analyses.

Duration in cinema is a very delicate matter, as anyone knows who has shown Straub or Michael Snow to an unreceptive audience. Even viewers sophisticated in other respects become angry if their sense of proper filmic duration is challenged.

If Straub's transgressions in *Not Reconciled* have to do with order, those of his *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* (1968) have to do with duration. The 93-minute film consists almost entirely of images and sounds of musicians in period costume playing Bach's works. An account of the circumstances of the composing and playing of these works, of Bach's financial difficulties, of the births and deaths of their children—and of little else—is spoken over the images and music by Anna Magdalena. She usually speaks over the ending of one work and the beginning of another or in very brief intervals between them. She also speaks very rapidly, as though speaking of family matters and external circumstances hurriedly between musical performances. Straub calls it a Marxist film because it presents the actual production of music (directly recorded), to which Bach's waking hours were massively devoted, as well as his marginal economic status and his struggle for the right to select his musicians. Despite superb performances of well-chosen Bach works, *Chronicle* still has the power to empty theaters and classrooms.

In the commercial realm, Frank Capra reports in his autobiography that the first

THE CHRONICLE OF ANNA MAGDALENA BACH

LE PETIT SOLDAT

version of *Lost Horizon* (1937) was too long and had too much background to the main story. As a result, the preview audience was restless throughout the screening. A durational miscalculation at the beginning threw off the reception of the entire film. Capra's response was to "Burn the first two reels," his chapter title for the incident, an indication of how strongly the durational code is enforced.

Film's multi-channelled textuality raises durational problems, and opportunities, not found in literature. Image, dialogue, voice-over, music, sound effects, and written materials may contribute, complementarily or redundantly, to a single duration; or they may create multiple, simultaneous, or contradictory temporalities. Modern films have exploited such possibilities in a variety of ways. In *Le Petit Soldat* (1960), like *The Lady From Shanghai* (1948) before it, a final shot of the hero is held while the voice-over summarizes a much larger time period:

> It was after killing Palivoda that I learned of Veronica's death. Only one thing was left to me: learn not to be bitter. But I was happy, because I had a lot of time in front of me.

Similarly, *Badlands* (1973) opens with a long take of Holly in bed playing with her dog, over which we hear her voice-over:

> My mother died of pneumonia when I was just a kid. My father had kept their wedding cake in the freezer for ten whole years. After the funeral he gave it to the yard man. He tried to act cheerful but he could never be consoled by the little stranger he found in his house. Then one day, hoping to begin a new life away from the scene of all his memories, he moved us from Texas to Fort Dupree, South Dakota.

The classical cinema is not without its durational contradictions either, although one must look more carefully to find them. *How Green Was My Valley* (1941) covers many years of its novel source in less than one year, including births, deaths, two sets of emigrations, the transformation of the valley from garden to slagheap, etc. In the same year Huw begins school, graduates, and goes to work in the mines. The decision to use Roddy McDowall as Huw throughout the film imposes this durational contradiction: Huw does not age while events around him suggest years going by. The other players do seem to get older—there is even an excuse for his mother's hair turning white suddenly. The duration of the plot and that implied by the performance level are contradictory, something that could not happen in literature.

Genette continues his discussion of duration and prepares for his discussion of frequency by proposing a general system of narrative speeds. In theory there is a continuous gradation from the infinite speed of ellipsis, defined as story time without discourse time, to the absolute slowness of descriptive pause, defined as discourse time without story time. In fact the narrative tradition has reduced that liberty to four basic relationships that Genette calls the canonical forms of novelistic tempo. Besides ellipsis and descriptive pause, there are the scene, most often in dialogue, realizing an equality of time between narrative and story, and the summary, a form with variable tempo—that of the other three is fixed—that covers the entire range between scene and ellipsis. Summary remained, to the end of the nineteenth century, the most usual transition between scenes, the background against which scenes stood out, and thus the connective tissue par excellence of novelistic

narrative, whose fundamental rhythm was defined by the alternation of summary and scene. Genette ingeniously shows that, despite appearances, there are almost no summaries in Proust and no descriptive pauses. Proustian descriptions are always grounded in a character's perception and therefore are parts of scenes. Moreover, narrative cutting in Proust is never accomplished by Balzacian summaries but by a quite different kind of synthesis, that of the frequentive or iterative, which is used in conjunction with ellipses.

The cinematic equivalent of Genette's scene is clear enough; indeed the notion and the prestige of the dramatically present moment were borrowed by the novel from theater. Summary we will consider in relation to the iterative, below. Ellipsis in cinema is a vast topic; aside from single-take films on the Lumière model or virtual long takes like Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), there can be no cinema without ellipsis. In Rossellini, Godard, and other figures of modern cinema, as in the later *Recherche,* ellipses tend to become longer and more abrupt. The scenes between gaps are not necessarily longer, as in Proust, but may be denser in synthesized content (Rossellini) or in *cinéma-vérité* detail (Godard). Rossellini's ellipses trace the movements of an argument unconcerned with conventional diegesis, though what he does show is usually "neorealist" in its detail and objectivity. Similarly, but differently, Godard likes to balance the ethnographic detail of actual locations, direct sound, and observed gestures with the arbitrary jumps and *dénouements* of fiction, often expressed through ellipses. (In *Masculin Feminin* [1966], Paul's death occurs between the next-to-last and the last sequences.) Generalizing is hazardous, but both Rossellini and Godard tend to use long takes around their ellipses, as though their abruptness and force would be lost amidst montages.

Description poses special problems for film analysis because every shot serves a descriptive function, whatever else it may do. At the same time no shot is entirely descriptive, therefore cannot be a true descriptive pause, because the fixed time of film viewing makes it dramatic also. Even if no action occurs in this shot or in this setting, the time devoted to them builds expectations for action to come; they too are ticks on the dramatic clock. Indeed few things build more expectancy than silent shots of objects in a narrative film.

Speaking very broadly, some films seem to invent actions to fill out projects descriptive of a time or place (Ford's *Judge Priest*); others describe an environment so that we will understand the action to follow (every heist film). The opening scenes of classical narrative films generally describe a setting while introducing us to the protagonists of the action. The trick in classical script construction, as in the theater before it, was to accomplish this while already advancing the action. The opening sequence of *How Green Was My Valley,* told in the frequentive tense, describes a complex setting in detail, introduces us by name and personality to eight or nine characters, indeed to an entire village, and immerses us in a nostalgic vision of a way of life that will begin to deteriorate in the next sequence.

Description provides a bridge to frequentive or iterative narrative, for as Genette says, "The classic function of iterative narrative is thus fairly close to that of description, with which, moreover, it maintains very close relations." Narrative frequency has to do with the relations of repetition between the narrative and the story. Genette proposes a system of relationships between the capacities for repetition on the part of both the narrated events of the story and the narrative statements of the text. This system is reducible to four virtual types. One may narrate once what happened once; one may narrate *n* times what happened *n* times; one may narrate *n* times what happened once; one may narrate one time what happened *n* times. The last is the frequentive or, as Genette prefers to call it, iterative narrative, in which a single utterance takes upon itself several occurrences of the same event: "For a long time I used to go to bed early."

In classical narrative, iterative sections are almost always functionally subordinate to singulative scenes, for which they provide a sort of informative frame or background. In this the classical function of iterative narrative is fairly close to that of description: both are at the service of the narrative as such, which is the singulative narrative. The first novelist to liberate the iterative from its functional dependence was Flaubert, who constructed entire passages in its mode. But no novel has

How Green Was My Valley

given the iterative a scope, importance, or technical elaboration comparable to Proust's. Genette develops these points in a series of fine analyses, including a classification of kinds of iteration that need not concern us here. Suffice it to say that his elaboration of the iterative is one of the most original things in *Narrative Discourse.*

In classical cinema, as in the classical novel, the iterative nearly always has an information or background function subordinate to singulative scenes. The exterior shots of trains or buses in backstage musicals signify numberless such journeys. If the words "Baltimore," "Philadelphia," "New Haven" appear under a series of train shots, as in *The Bandwagon,* then there is a narrative summary as well as iterative narrative; a specific itinerary is signified as well as numerous rides on trains. The montages of nightclub signs and clinking champagne glasses in romantic comedies are iterative in function. If they stand for a series of such evenings, they are what Genette calls generalizing or external iteration; if for one of them, what he calls synthesizing or internal iteration.

In *Trouble in Paradise* (1932), Lubitsch shows Mme. Colet's typical activities as head of a company by cutting from her on a stairway to four shots of servants and assistants down below, who say, respectively: "Yes, Mme. Colet," "No, Mme. Colet," "No, Mme. Colet," "Yes, Mme. Colet." This rhyme is itself rhymed later when Gaston has taken over direction of the company. Lubitsch shows this change (summary) and the typical obedience that Gaston now receives (iteration) by cutting from him to another series of servants and subordinates: "Yes, M. LaValle," "No, M. LaValle," "No, M. LaValle," "Yes, M. LaValle." Needless to say, the repeated yesses and nos also echo and mock the sexual oscillation that is going on in the plot.

The opening sequence of *How Green Was My Valley* presents a large and sustained figure of iteration; it takes up over half of the film's entire spoken narration by the older Huw, whose face we never see. As he is leaving it for the last time, Huw remembers his valley as it was when he was a boy, describing a typical day through a repeated use of the word "would," the principal verb form for the frequentive in English.

> Someone would strike up a song and the valley would ring with the sound of many voices . . . Then came the scrubbing . . . Most (of the coal) would come off but some would stay for life . . . There was always a baron of beef or a shoulder or leg of lamb before my father. There was never any talk while we were eating . . . My mother was always on the run . . . After dinner, when dishes had been washed, the box was brought to the table, for the spending money to be handed out. No one in our valley had ever seen a bank. We kept our savings on the mantlepiece.

At this point, when Huw gets his penny, hurries to the candy shop, and meets Bron, his future sister-in-law, the voice-over narration suffers an odd sea-change, dropping almost imperceptibly from the iterative to the singulative mode.

> It was on this afternoon that I first met Bron—Bronwen. She had come over from the next valley for her first call on my father and mother.
>
> I think I fell in love with Bronwen then.

Which afternoon is "this," since the voice-over has been describing the typical activities of many days but of no particular day? Thematically one might call this a fall into time: out of the frequentive mode, which is preserved, as in Proust, from the ravages of time, into the singulative mode, the order of irreversible time and change, in which the family will be dispersed and the valley destroyed. The fall into time is also a fall from grace, corresponding to Huw's first love attachment outside of the family as well as to his brother's marriage, the first actual division of the family.

Most interesting, theoretically, is how and why such a slippage is possible in cinematic

iterative; it would not be in literary narrative. Are the images neutrally either iterative or singulative, depending upon a voice-over to define their temporal status? If so, then the continuity of the images may sustain us through a shift in tense, while the changed verbal tense tells us how to read the images. Or is there a shift of reference here? The images have seemed to follow the voice-over narration, as though illustrating it; perhaps, its introductory function accomplished, the voice-over now refers to the images. "This afternoon" seems to refer to the images we see before us. This shift may prepare us for the withdrawal of the voice-over in favor of the images, which will now be furnished with synchronized dialogue; this is what happens in *How Green Was My Valley*. After Huw describes his love for Bronwen and the scene shifts to her introduction to the family, from which young Huw is pointedly excluded, his voice-over ceases—except for seven or eight more interjections of a clearly summarizing sort throughout the rest of the film.

Our discussion of *How Green Was My Valley* raises the problem of what Genette calls the pseudo-iterative:

> scenes presented, particularly by their wording in the imperfect, as iterative, whereas their richness and precision of detail ensure that no reader can seriously believe they occur and reoccur in that manner, several times, without any variation.

This happens occasionally in Proust; in cinema it is pervasive because "richness and precision of detail" seem to be inherent in photography and sound recording, at least in those practices of them engaged in by most films. Thus Donald Crisp and company walk to the pay window in precisely this way only once, as recorded in the take included in the release print of the film. Some might take an ultra-literal position and say that this makes the iterative impossible in cinema; its images and sounds are always singulative. But, as noted, cinema is a "complex system"; it is the "concerted action" of images, sounds, including voice-overs, and written words that create meaning in cinema, including iterative constructions. And, as Metz once argued, the fact to be understood is that films are understood, including the cinematic iterative.

Nevertheless, the singulative tendency of recorded sounds and images can have a backlash effect on iterative constructions. *How Green Was My Valley* goes from the iterative to the singulative by virtue of a tense change in the voice-over. A much more frequent figure is a scene that begins in the iterative, by virtue of a title or a voice-over, then becomes singulative, as though reverting to the singulative in the absence of continued linguistic definition to the contrary. A title in *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1925) tells us that the way a gentleman rings a lady's doorbell reflects the state of their relationship and we see a tentative finger finally engage the button. "But when he knows her well . . .", says a later title, and we see an impatient finger ringing and ringing. Under the pressure of the title, these images are iterative: they narrate once what happened many times; but in the scenes that follow each image, singulative events occur. One might say that the doorbell images are iterative and the rest of each scene singulative; or better, that the doorbell images have a dual status, belonging both to an iterative construction and to a singulative one.

There is also the opposite problem, what Genette calls "a sort of contamination by the iterative" of a singulative scene. In Proust this is produced by a few iterative sentences within a singulative passage. In cinema, as in the other performing arts, there are many ways to suggest habit, frequency of occurrence, and typicality within a singulative context. Indeed, how many plays and films, from *King Lear* to *On the Waterfront,* open on a scene of habitual order just as it is about to be changed irrevocably.

Genette's chapters on mood and voice painstakingly and brilliantly distinguish them. Perhaps for that reason, his treatment of the two topics is very much intertwined. Strictly speaking, the mood of narrative statements can only be the indicative since the function of a narrative is to report facts, real or fictive, not to give an order (the imperative), to express a wish or state a condition (the subjunctive), etc. Admitting that he is extending the linguistic metaphor, Genette argues that within the indicative there are differences between degrees of affirmation as well as different points of view from which an action may be looked at. One can tell *more or less* what one tells and one can tell it according to one point of view or another; this capacity and the

modalities of its use are what Genette's category of narrative mood concerns. Thus the chief subcategories of mood are distance and perspective. The narrative can furnish more or fewer details, rendered in a more or less direct way, and can thus seem to keep at a greater or lesser distance from what it tells. That distance need not be fixed throughout a narrative but may vary according to the knowledge of one or more participants in the story, adopting what is usually called their point of view. Thus the narrative seems to take on, with regard to the story, one or another perspective.

Genette's discussion of distance entails an extended contrast between mimesis and diegesis. Mimesis is direct imitation, as are words and actions on a stage. Written narration cannot be mimetic since it presents words and actions described by an intermediary, the author or, more correctly, the narrative discourse itself. An exception is direct speech, presented in the manner of drama, in which the mediation of the narrator seems to disappear. Genette cleverly shows that the interior monologue, which he prefers to call immediate speech, pushes mimesis to its limit by "obliterating the last traces of the narrating instance and giving the floor to the character right away." Some analysts have called cinema or particular films or passages mimetic, others have called them diegetic; sometimes the terms are used more or less interchangably. Genette's definitions might make possible a new clarity regarding cinematic instances, although, again, cinema is a more difficult case because it is a "complex system." Films usually present the direct imitation of speech and action but do so in a mediated, or diegetic way. Films may combine mimetic and diegetic elements in a large variety of ways and may also oppose them through slight discrepancies or gaps, as in Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest* (1951).

Narrative perspective is a second mode of regulating information, turning on the use or absence of a restrictive point of view. Genette confronts at the outset a widespread confusion between mood and voice, between the question: Whose point of view orients the narrative perspective? and the question: Who is the narrator? Or, more simply, between "Who sees?" and "Who speaks?" Genette's clarification of this large, muddied realm is, with his original discussion of frequency, his most conspicuous achievement.

Genette prefers the term "focus of narration" or "focalization" to "point of view." Ishmael and Strether occupy the same focal positions in *Moby-Dick* and *The Ambassadors* respectively. That Ishmael also narrates while an author absent from the story narrates *The Ambassadors* is a question of voice, not of mood. Wayne Booth's implied author and narrator, the narrator who is dramatized or undramatized, reliable or unreliable, are all categories of voice.

Genette distinguishes nonfocalized narratives, generally the classical narrative, from internally and externally focalized narratives. Internal focalizations are fixed if we rarely leave the point of view of one character; variable if we go back and forth between more than one character; or multiple if the same event is evoked several times according to the point of view of different characters, e.g., *The Sound and the Fury,* certain epistolary novels, or *Rashomon.* In external focalization (some of Hammett and Hemingway), the hero performs in front of us without our knowing his thoughts or feelings. A focalization is not necessarily steady; a work may combine many types of focalization, even all of them, although particular passages are usually focalized in one way rather than another. The division between variable focalization and nonfocalization is sometimes difficult to establish, since the nonfocalized narrative can most often be analyzed as a narrative that is multifocalized *ad libitum.*

Older Huw is the narrator of *How Green Was My Valley*—it is literally his voice that we hear; but this does not control the question of mood. We almost never see things from young Huw's visual perspective. *How Green* is nonfocalized in that no sequence, let alone the whole film, is shot from any one character's perspective. It is variably focalized in that it frequently borrows a character's perspective for one or more shots—sometimes for dramatic reasons, sometimes opportunistically because it yields a stunning image or an efficient view of the action. Huw's arrival at school is shot in a non-focalized way; he is small and timid in the hallway but no character is looking at him in this way. When Huw opens the door, Ford cuts to his point of

view of the girls in the class looking hostile, then to the boys in the class, farther away, looking even more hostile. (Both shots cannot be from Huw's perspective, strictly speaking.) Ford then cuts to a shot of the teacher from Huw's point of view but when he is summoned to the front of the room, his point of view is dropped in favor of, more or less, the point of view of the class. Later on, a few shots of Huw's fight in the school yard are taken from the perspective of a girl who is sympathetic to Huw but not otherwise an important character. Ford gives us a few shots from Huw's perspective to register the first impact of school, then proceeds in a nonfocalized or variably focalized way to present the events that happen there.

Several of the film's shots are classical Griffith-Ford iconic images, for some of which, anyway, there can be no character perspective, unless it be that of God or America. Such shots include those of the entire family assembled, for which there can be no character perspective because there is none who is not part of the scene. Many of the final memory images in *How Green,* though not of the entire family, are also of this kind.

Genette's account of voice is particularly long and complex; our remarks will be partial and abbreviated. Genette equates voice with "the narrating instance," that is, with the presence of the narrator in the story he tells. The narrator is not the author and not a character. Even where the narrating is identified with a character, the instances are distinct. The elements of the narrating situation include "time of the narrating," "narrative level," and "person."

The tense structure of language requires a narrator to situate himself temporally in relation to the story he tells—but not spatially. Narrators almost never describe the place where they are narrating; moreover, the narration itself, as opposed to the story, has no apparent duration. In the classical novel, in Proust, "narrating involves an instantaneous action."

Voice-over narrators in cinema are generally shown: Joe Gillis floating dead in a pool in *Sunset Boulevard;* Walter Neff addressing the dictaphone in *Double Indemnity;* Addison DeWitt and Karen Richards sitting at the banquet table in *All About Eve.* In *How Green* we see the older Huw pack his things in order to leave the valley but his face is hidden, as though sharing the shame of the besmirched valley and the degraded present. We do *not* see the writer of *A Letter to Three Wives* (1949), who narrates the film; a more remarkable transgression of this sort is *Le Plaisir* (1951) by Max Ophuls. Over a blank screen, the author, presumably Maupassant (voice of Peter Ustinov), speaks to us:

> I have always loved the night, the hours of darkness. That's why I am so grateful to be able to speak to you in the dark. They wanted to photograph me; after all, this is a photographic m-medium, can one say that? But that I didn't allow. An author's pleasure is to be heard, not seen. I thought the best thing might be if I just told you these stories myself, as if I were sitting beside you and, well, who knows, maybe I am. I will try to speak English, but I have not had as much practice as I would like. Perhaps you can guess my anxiety. These tales are rather old and you are so very modern, as we all call ourselves while we are still alive. Anyway, be patient with me. Here's the first story.

The instances mentioned all realize that instantaneity of narration of which Genette speaks: Huw packing his things, DeWitt and Richards at the banquet table, and Joe in the pool remember it all and speak it all in a flash. *Not Reconciled* does something different in this respect also. Robert Fähmel, the narrator of the two-part analepsis about the thirties, pauses in the middle of his story for a cognac and the film devotes five shots to the fetching of the cognac. This includes two brief flashbacks concerning the duties of Hugo, Robert's listener, in the hotel. In Straub, even the listener has his own material situation and even listening must be produced; narrating and listening usually take place in an idealist utopia, free of physical and economic constraints.

Genette on person rejects the distinction between "first-person" and "third-person" narratives. Every narrating is, by definition, presented in the first person; this is the only way a narrator can be in his narrative. The real question is whether or not the narrator will use the first person to designate one of his characters; but even when he does, the narrating instance and the character remain distinct; they do not merge. For one thing, the narrator almost always knows more than the hero, even when he is himself the hero. "For the narrator focalization through the

hero is a restriction of field just as artificial in the first person as in the third." Marcel the narrator knows everything that will happen to Marcel the character from the moment he begins to narrate. "Between the information of the hero and the omniscience of the novelist is the information of the narrator, who disposes of it according to his own lights and holds it back only when he sees a precise reason for doing so." Advance notices in a narrative, and more generally all prolepses, cannot be the hero's doing, they must be the narrator's.

Thus older Huw knows in advance everything that will happen to the Morgans in the film and withholds information in order to reveal it gradually, as do DeWitt and Richards in *Eve* and other narrators in their films. This follows from the nature of the narrating instance, but something is wrong with this statement. Maybe we do not believe that Huw, DeWitt and Richards, etc., really narrate their entire stories. There is first the fact that many important scenes in each film could not be known by their narrators: the wedding party for Bronwen and Ivor, the scenes between Angharad and Mr. Gryffyd, the town gossip scenes, and others in *How Green;* the intimate scenes between Margo and Bill and between Lloyd and Eve, all the scenes of Eve alone, and others in *Eve.* Genette defines as "alterations" instances of narrators giving more information (or less) than is within their competence, saying that such momentary infractions of the code governing the narrational context may not call the code itself into question. But these instances go well beyond this definition and make us question what the code of the voice-over narrator in classical films is.

There is also the fact that the narrators of *How Green, Eve* and other films are actually silent for most of the film. In both instances, there is a good deal of narration at the beginning of the film in order to set the scene and to introduce the main characters; once that is done, the film proceeds in usual scenic fashion, the voice-over brought back from time to time to provide narrative summaries and to bridge ellipses in the long period of time covered by each film. (This is a long year in the case of *How Green;* a theatrical season, October to June, in the case of *Eve.*) The conclusion seems unavoidable that voice-over narration in classical cinema has little

ALL ABOUT EVE

in common with character narration in fiction; it is a narrative convenience used and dropped by the film to suit its purposes. Character narration in fiction is often consistent for the whole text; if a character's voice is dropped, it is usually in favor of another character's voice. There are switches from subjective voice to objective voice, as in the final section of *The Sound and the Fury,* but there is usually not then a return to subjective voice. The voice-over in film is usually picked up and dropped by the film at will, according to no principle but expediency. Above all, of course, voice-over narration in cinema does not comprise the whole text. It does not pervade the text or inflect every detail of it, color it, shape it, lend it its entire flavor, as character narration in fiction does. In the "complex system" of cinema, it is just one element among many elements, to be juggled along with them, often in shifting combinations.

A closer look at the functions of the narrators in *How Green* and *Eve* will confirm and amplify these points, since their patterns are typical of voice-over narration in classical cinema generally. Both films begin with long voice-over narrations at the beginning of the film: to describe the setting and general situation and to introduce the characters by name, occupation, and relation to the other characters, as the camera shows us their faces and their physical environment. Both films have an unusually large number of important characters and both attempt to situate them, complexly and fully, in a distinctive milieu, a world. To attempt this through usual, objective exposition seems difficult, if not impossible—though that may be because the devices

work so well and are used so skilfully in these two films. It seems undeniable, however, that the convention of the voice-over made possible more complex, "novelistic" projects than formerly.

The function of the voice-over narration in *How Green* and *Eve* is not only to introduce a complex situation but to bridge the transition of the narrative from present to past, a shift that will hold good for most or all of the rest of the film. (All of it in *How Green;* all but the final scene in *Eve,* which is a kind of epilogue and a looping of the narrative, oddly parallel to the looping of visuals at the end of *How Green.*) If we recall the crisis of order posed to classical cinema by an analepsis, we appreciate the importance of this function. One wonders, indeed, if bridging the transition from present to past may not be the primary function of voice-overs in the classical period; that is, whether "voice" is not determined by "order" in classical narrative films, at least in part.

Often, as in *How Green* and *Eve,* a voice-over will continue for a certain duration after the bridge from present to past; to insure continuity, to provide orientation and exposition within the world of the flashback, and to reintroduce characters and plot situation within the flashback. Then, when the analepsis is well-launched, the film characteristically drops the voice-over and proceeds for the main part of the film in an objective way. About two-thirds of Huw's total narration in *How Green* is spoken in the opening sequence of the film, until the formal introduction of Bronwen to the family, a duration of about ten minutes. The first 14 of the 25 voice-over speeches in *Eve* occur in the opening sequence of the film, until we see Eve in the theater alley as she approaches Karen Richards. Also, in both films, the voice-over recedes just before the first big, objective scene, in both cases a vivid set-piece serving to make us forget the introductory voice and to launch the world of the flashback on its own: the wedding of Bronwen and Ivor and the party that follows in *How Green;* the introduction of Eve to Margo and company in *Eve.* Thereafter, in both films, the voice-over returns occasionally to provide brief narrative summaries and to bridge transitions within the analepsis. This happens eight times in *How Green,* 11 times in *Eve;* for example:

Huw: Twenty-two weeks the men were out, as the strike moved into winter . . .

And so it came to Ianto and Davy, the best paid workers in the colliery, but too highly paid to compete with poorer, more desperate men.

Then Angharad came back from Capetown without her husband . . .

Karen: It was a cold week-end—outside and in. Bill didn't come at all. Margo didn't know where he was and didn't care—she kept saying. Somehow we staggered through Sunday—and by the time we drove Margo to the station late Monday afternoon, she and Lloyd had thawed out to the extent of being civil to each other . . .

Lloyd never go around, somehow—to asking whether it was all right with me for Eve to play "Cora" . . .

Addison: To the Theatre world—New Haven, Connecticut, is a short stretch of sidewalk between the Schubert Theatre and the Taft Hotel, surrounded by what looks very much like a small city. It is here that managers have what are called out-of-town openings—which are openings for New Yorkers who want to go out of town.

Such transition or scene-setting speeches turn their narrators into speaking title cards, pragmatic in the case of *How Green,* ornate and witty in the case of *Eve.* But what a comedown from the high-flown openings of both narrations, which even lead us to believe that the films might be about their speakers! Instead Huw is a bystander in most of the scenes in which he appears and is missing altogether from many others. Addison is a bystander at the party scene and others and is missing altogether from even more scenes. Interestingly, each film gives its forgotten narrator one important scene or sequence later, the school sequence for Huw in *How Green;* Addison's "killer to killer" confrontation with Eve in *Eve.*

The voice-over narrator in classical film is a puppet of the narration. One might say the same of character-narrators in fiction, but they at least are always onstage and are built to withstand observation; they also serve all the functions of the narration. The puppet narrators of cinema are jerked on and off stage in a manner that is quite undignified. They may have integrity as characters but they have no integrity as narrators, no resistance to the demands placed upon them; they are nothing but the functions they serve, a collection of odd jobs. They are reeds buffeted by

the winds of the narrative; their voices resonate but they are hollow. An important part of their function is to mimic the novelistic voice, the guarantor of experience, subjectivity, and seriousness, with its "I remember" and "I suffer." In fact these inflated "I"s of classical cinema "open" for the main story; they are second-rate acts that warm up the audience with their sonorities. They are ludicrous stand-ins for the novelistic "I" because, though they wind up elaborately, they have nothing to pitch. For precisely these reasons, of course, voice-over narrators in cinema are interesting; they ruthlessly expose the mechanisms of narration in classical cinema.

This is not to disparage the convention of the voice-over in cinema, which has figured in so many excellent films. It is rather to indicate that if we seek to define voice in cinema, in Genette's sense, we will have to look beyond these voices.

Reviews

THE KING OF COMEDY

Director: Martin Scorsese. Script: Paul D. Zimmerman. Producer: Arnon Milchan. Twentieth Century-Fox.

In *The Total Film Maker,* his book on film technique, Jerry Lewis wrote, "Emulsion has the strangest capacity to react. It's almost like infectious hepatitis, only germ known to medical science that can't be sterilized off a needle. It picks up information germs." This bizarre simile, like the best of Lewis's films, reveals a certain outrageous truth underlying the inanity. The cinema and infectious hepatitis—information carriers, contagions beyond control. The virulence of the cinema was even presented as medical fact in the trial of John Hinckley, whose defense rested to a great degree on the notion that film images intruded into his already diseased mind—images from another Martin Scorsese film starring Robert DeNiro. *Taxi Driver* was by no means the first cultural product accused of spreading cultural disease, but what was shocking was that it communicated its most decisive message to Hinckley in the form of strictly iconic images, narrative gestures which could be, and were, mimicked in an absolutely straightforward way. Certain "information germs" which *Taxi Driver* had picked up had zeroed in on a receptive subject, germs which catalyzed a spectator's murderous obsession with actress Jody Foster. According to her confessional testimony in *Esquire,* Foster's initial reaction to the assassination attempt was to laugh herself silly.

The King of Comedy was already in preproduction at the time of the shooting, but it can hardly escape its own context. Its audacity lies both in its comic treatment of obsession and in its refusal to offer any explanation for its characters' behavior—any explanation, that is, outside of the domain of images and their effects. Unlike *Taxi Driver,* which tries in a very literal way to examine what kind of nut would drive a cab in New York, *The King of Comedy* avoids ethnography by challenging the distance between audience and character, by centering its story on the relationship between spectator and fiction. Unlike the exotic Travis Bickle, firmly categorized as a psychopathic Other, Rupert Pupkin shares with his audience an intense desire to look at images, participate in them, and be gratified by them. Instead of being a nut-out-there, Pupkin is very specifically a nut-in-here as far as the audience is concerned. What pushes him over the brink is his compulsion to extend his vicarious participation in an on-screen world into action. Scorsese and Paul Zimmerman, the screenwriter, steadfastly refuse to pry into Rupert's psyche and, by so doing, control him. His fantasies are not traced back to some psycho-sexual misfire and are therefore not packaged away. Without this explanatory gesture and the moralism it would entail, the joke of *The King of Comedy*—an aspiring comedian kidnaps and threatens to kill a talk-show host unless he, the comedian/kidnapper, gets a spot on the show—is played first on the comedian, then on the victim, and finally on the spectator. If Pupkin is the brunt of the

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first joke because he's crazy, and the talk-show host is the brunt of the second because he's kidnapped, it is the spectator, whose vicarious entry into narrative the film both demands and ridicules, who ends up the laughingstock. Pupkin, the hero, becomes less of a character than a *deus ex machina* designed to turn an audience's perceptions back on itself.

On the level of performance, both DeNiro and his co-star, Jerry Lewis, could hardly be said to effect well-roundedness; as a matter of fact, the film depends on quite a different conception of character. First, both actors are cast somewhat against type, with Lewis's casting being particularly perverse since he is the object of a character's obnoxious interest rather than being the obnoxious character himself. His explosive persona is kept under such tight control that he becomes sinister—forbidden to scream, to roll his eyes, even to gesture wildly or contort, he becomes a sort of hollowed-out reproduction of himself, an image never able to do what is expected of it. Similarly, DeNiro never indulges the dynamism with which he made a career. Though he plays an obsessive character, he denies himself the psychologizing quality associated with his screen persona by expressing only its outer shell. Having a psyche which only perceives a limited amount of the information presented to it, Pupkin remains a two-dimensional character, as flat as a television or movie screen. In one scene, Pupkin sits between cardboard cut-outs of Liza Minnelli and Jerry Lewis (as Jerry Langford, the talk-show host) and conducts a conversation with them. That he acts as if the cut-outs were real is only half the joke; more to the point is that Pupkin fits right in. Like Lewis, DeNiro suppresses any sense of emotional anarchy, and his character's single-mindedness is horrifying precisely because there seems to be absolutely no governing intelligence behind it.

With Lewis in particular, the idea of an autonomous, well-rounded character gives way. The role of Jerry Langford, obviously modeled on Johnny Carson, was actually offered to Carson, whose fear of life imitating art made him turn it down. Instead of just having Carson play Carson, an image made in its own image, Scorsese then had the opportunity to play one image against another while also playing it against itself. The opening shots of *The King of Comedy,* marked visually as video, are likewise the opening shots of *The Jerry Langford Show,* a point by point imitation of *The Tonight Show:* titles against a multi-colored curtain, an announcer named Ed, the star walking through the curtains and ending up in 3/4 shot, a shot of the band leaders, and into the star's monologue. Dependent not only on the familiarity of Lewis as a comedian and telethon-host, the opening sequence rests on the recognition of the structured and inviolable opening of a popular television show. It is this familiarity, so readily accepted by anyone even remotely acquainted with American popular culture, which propels the obsessive Rupert Pupkin into action. In other words, it is a symbolic familiarity which both star and presentation encourage but which Rupert accepts without qualification—entering the living room every night in exactly the same way, Jerry Langford becomes a houseguest, a friend, in a certain sense a possession.

But for the fan, possessing a star's image is only the first step toward actually possessing the star. The second stage, wanting a relic, takes the form of autograph hounds who form a violent mob outside Langford's stage door. Scorsese introduces Pupkin, as well as his equally obsessive friend Masha (Sandra Bernhard) in this context, and the violence of the scene contrasts with the hermetic organization of the Langford show. Aside from the tonal contrast, though, these two scenes are consequential—the images presented on television and in films already contain the seeds of an unrequited and potentially violent desire. On every level from commerce to form, the screen compels pleasure and then refuses to gratify it completely; Langford's image, carefully and cozily situated in its regular format, encourages as much attention as possible without ever foreclosing the option of appearing the next day, without ever exhausting the attracted viewer's desire. Langford himself, however, resists any intrusion into his life and is appalled by the attention he receives. Retreating into a limousine and then into a steely apartment, the real Jerry Langford seeks only isolation.

His fans, meanwhile, are quite out of control. Not content with the image as it is offered

Jerry Lewis and Robert DeNiro: the lunch scene in THE KING OF COMEDY

on the television screen, they demand the icon himself, hoping to find in him a final consummation. In Frank Tashlin's 1956 film, *Hollywood or Bust,* a similar quest toward meeting a star forms the basis of the whole story. There, Jerry Lewis plays a film buff driven toward meeting his idol, Anita Ekberg. For Lewis's character, the screen appearance of the star is merely an incomplete substitute, and his failure to make the gratifying conceptual leap from the iconic to the symbolic, to locate desire within the image itself, leads to tremendous fear and frustration. The star exists above him, and the unsatisfying nature of the relationship he has with her by way of the movies is due, he thinks, to his own inadequacy. In *The King of Comedy,* though, the obsessive fans evidence no fear at all. Unlike Lewis in *Hollywood or Bust,* they see no qualitative difference between themselves and the star and therefore have no hesitation in approaching him. Since he has, after all, been in their homes every night for years, they see Langford as being no different from themselves. By turning the tables on that crucial separation between spectator and star which film and television tend to maintain, they refuse to be content with the passive role assigned to them and, in their dissatisfaction, become a bit subversive.

Through the complex interactions of star and fan, familiarity and violence, Scorsese exposes the contradictory forces at work in audiovisual narration: his obsessive characters are unable to reconcile their attraction toward images with the fact that images are not substantial. But while Masha's obsession takes the form of hysteria, Rupert channels his energy creatively into becoming an image himself. Unfortunately, Scorsese does not take this sexual and ideological aspect into account at all. Fashioning himself a talent, Rupert aspires to become a comedian, but more impressively, he writes his own narrative as he goes along since Scorsese incorporates scenes of his fantasies into the seemingly objective narrative of the film. After the scene in which Rupert meets Langford, Scorsese cuts directly to a scene in which Rupert and Langford have a congenial business lunch to discuss Rupert's future as a comic. There are no stylistic clues that the lunch scene is only taking place in Rupert's mind—the cut, like any other, serves to develop the narrative by joining one fiction to another. Structured classically with two-shots and over-the-shoulder shots (Langford on the left, Rupert on the right), the lunch scene proceeds with Langford offering one compliment after another to the magnanimous Rupert until Scorsese cuts

abruptly to Rupert alone in his basement, still carrying on the conversation, still on the right side of the screen. Then, by cross-cutting back and forth between restaurant and basement, Scorsese implies not just that Rupert is deluded but that in this case the delusion takes the form of a classical film dialogue sequence in which Rupert includes himself in every shot. Rupert creatively transgresses the bounds of space and time by constructing and conjoining images; further, he places himself prominently in the images, thereby becoming spectator, author, and actor.

The scene concludes with Rupert laughing at his own joke, a joke which is told in two-shot and at which Langford laughs as well. Rupert's laughter, a controlled show-biz laugh, the kind stars use on talk-shows, continues into a shot of Rupert alone in his basement, still on the right of the frame. Abruptly, Rupert switches sides—he takes Jerry's place on the screen, laughs for him, becomes him in a visual twist that neatly foreshadows his literal replacement of Jerry on the show.

From this point on, each consecutive scene is called into question in terms of both content and contiguity. Just as Pupkin simply cuts to a scene he'd like to see, Scorsese turns the progress of the narrative into overt wish fulfillment. When Rupert, sitting at a bar, asks the barmaid out of the blue if she'd like to go out on a date with him, Scorsese cuts directly to the date in progress. Since the event is exactly what Rupert wants, the cut is nearly as outrageous as the one which transported him into a luncheon with Jerry, though the date turns out to be "real" within the story. To his credit, Scorsese is not much interested in separating Rupert's perceptual problems from those of the audience by signalling Rupert's visions as unacceptable; what Rupert sees and what the audience sees are not all that different. There is one shot which distances the audience from Rupert's perceptions, and it occurs while Rupert makes a tape of his comedy routine to submit to Langford's office. Even here, though, the shot is ambiguous. From a shot of Rupert sitting in front of his recording equipment beginning his monologue, Scorsese cuts to a shot of Rupert standing in front of a huge blow-up photograph of an audience laughing. Their deafening laughter is heard on the sound track, and the camera tracks back to reveal a grey, tunnel-like room. On the one hand, the room is clearly a fiction within the fiction —photographs do not laugh; on the other hand, Rupert has already shown himself to have made life-size reproductions of Liza and Jerry, the difference being that the stars' blow-ups exist in the basement while the audience exists in a foreboding netherworld which, ironically enough, rather resembles Jerry Langford's apartment.

In a scene taking place at a row of pay phones in Times Square, where Rupert has stationed himself to receive calls from Langford's assistant, Scorsese dresses up an otherwise event-free scene—a character waiting for a call he probably won't get—by injecting a little violence. Suddenly all the other phones are broken, the receivers dangling, a hostile crowd closing in on Rupert. Just as suddenly, the phones are back in order and the crowd is gone. Whether the scene "really happened" or whether it is Rupert's paranoia at work makes little difference. The scene contains no reassuring explanation, no phone repairmen, no skewed camera angles to represent Rupert's perceptual error. The events are visible but not necessarily factual.

By failing to distinguish between representation and truth, by conflating image with icon, Rupert leads himself first to betrayal but then to success. He believes that Langford has invited him out to Long Island for the weekend, but Langford throws him out and insults him. His only choice is to take matters literally into his own hands and kidnap Langford, thereby consummating his desire to possess the star while also furthering his career goals. Strapping Jerry to a chair, Rupert then mummifies him with adhesive tape, an action Scorsese records in an overhead shot. Here, the restraints on Jerry Lewis's persona find a physical correlative; it is as if the dream of many a hostile film critic has come true. Bound and gagged, Lewis is forced to sit and watch as another borderline maniac threatens his life. Moreover, Rupert's circular movement around Langford becomes metonymic—in his desire to reach Jerry, Rupert goes round and round him and finally displaces him on TV.

According to the kidnapper's demands, Rupert's monologue must be broadcast or Langford will be killed. In other words, Rupert

must see himself become an image in his own right or he will destroy the source of his frustrated desire. That the gun is loaded with fake bullets and that the monologue turns out to be funny are in the final analysis less humorous than the fact of Rupert's success and the manner by which he attains it. The final sequence of *The King of Comedy,* like the first, appears as video. A newscaster begins to tell Rupert's story; images of Rupert appear on the screen; his face appears on magazine covers; he becomes the talk of the town. The video broadcast then switches time frames, skipping several years without a break in structure and continues with Rupert, now released from prison, having written a best-seller. Hundreds of copies of his book appear in a store window, and finally Rupert himself appears on a television sound stage to tremendous applause. Every element of ignominious pain—Rupert on trial, Rupert in jail, Rupert actually sitting at a typewriter writing a book —are excised from the sequence leaving only glory presented in the form of objective news. This extraordinary slide from a newsroom to Rupert as a star appearing in front of television cameras, a scene which is itself being recorded by a television camera, resolves the narrative by disintegrating it. For the spectator, unable to make a safe judgment between the fiction film and the fictions Rupert lays on top of it, Rupert's confusion becomes his or her own. From a newscast, that trusted source of seemingly unmediated facts, to Rupert Pupkin live on television, the sequence's profoundly ironic tone reveals the nature of images to be deeply perverse. The banality of content together with its sequential logic expose any transmission of information as being fraught with distortion and ambiguity.

Acutely aware of the complexities of image production and transmission, Scorsese's is an analytical comedy which tries to come to terms with its own consequences. In revealing Rupert's disturbance as being connected to the effects of representations, and in treating the information contained in every image as being highly manipulative and yet beyond control, Scorsese turns a scandal back on itself. Not a sociological battle between nuts and celebrities, Scorsese's conflict is played out on the screen, any screen, right in anyone's own home. —ED SIKOV

BEFORE THE NICKELODEON:
The Early Cinema of Edwin Porter

Director: Charles Musser. Producer: Steve Brier. Screenplay: Warren D. Leight and Charles Musser. Photography: Rob Issen. Editor: Charles Musser. Narrator: Blanche Sweet. 60 minutes. A Film For Thought Production. P.O. Box 820 Times Square Station. New York City, N.Y. 10108.

Barring arguments that the flickers started in the Lascaux Cave, movies seem to date from 'nineties technology (if systems for sequential photographs and their projection are central), or from nineteenth-century conventions of narrative if exposition is the focus. By current, common consent, the story of this early period dissolves from music halls into an alternative exhibition mode (the nickelodeon) around 1905. Few films make history, and fewer historians make films. Musser is an exception. The time of his historical field bounds a ragtime world syncopated by death (McKinley's assassination), devastation (the Galveston flood), and Victorian sex. (Saint-Gaudens's nude statuary stood atop Madison Square Garden where it might be studied from street level but close-up by way of rented telescopes.) Musser was researcher for Milos Forman's *Ragtime.*

Before the Nickelodeon consists of period movies, most of them filmed in New York City and often with New York City as the subject or the setting. Sometimes interspersed with photographs, this footage is accompanied by off-screen narration.

Along with much else, McKinley, Galveston and Tony Pastor's figure in Musser's production. The film concentrates on Edwin S. Porter, once an electrician and telegraph operator, then a movie projectionist in California and Central America, who also designed and built cameras and printers. Porter joined the Edison Company in 1900, charged to put their new East 21st Street studio in order. The step was part of Edison's strategy to pull away from dependence on independent film-makers like J. Stuart Blackton and Albert Smith (Vitagraph Company) and William Paley (who had been contracted to film Spanish-American War military footage for Edison's Warograph exhibitions).

The narrative follows Porter from his one shot/one film products (*Kansas Saloon Smashers*) into tiny, two-or-more shot topicals (*Terrible Teddy, The Grizzly King; The Sampson-Schley Controversy*) and amusements inflected

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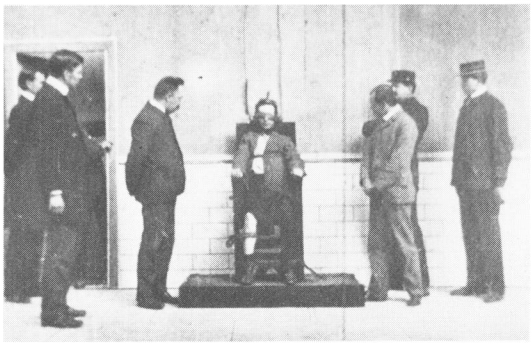

THE EXECUTION OF CZOLGOSZ *(Porter, 1901)*

by comic strips: *The Finish of Bridget McKeen.* (She lighted the fire with kerosene.) These titles date from 1901. Although one-shot productions continued to appear, within the next two years other story films were constituted with increasing numbers of segments. Significantly, the shots grew more interdependent, not simply telling autonomous beginnings, middles and endings or using out-and-out contrasts like rich/poor or before/after. Instead, shots began to connect one with another, to play across the cut, as it were, so that two or more segments might combine to express a single unit of meaning. To put the matter in Metzian terms, autonomous segments began to assume the semblance of syntagmas.

Until then, Musser argues, such decisions had often rested with whoever ran the film projector. He could not only decide what might be exhibited at any given performance and its order of appearance, but could also manipulate specific image-to-image relationships. Such control, playing editor as it were, was facilitated by newly designed film/magic lantern machinery: "Cineograph and Stereopticon Combined." A projectionist could intersperse slides with films, further to designate relationships between screen "events." In its own fashion, the entire process resembled a music hall entertainer's capacity to select, omit and pace his material in terms of any particular audience's state of mind and responses. The movies were literally one of vaudeville's several acts. Now these prerogatives were passing over to the production source; the movie cameraman was becoming an editor-director.

Musser's own film presents excerpts from many archival treasures, both actualities and staged footage. Some of this material is not Porter's own, but used rather to set an ambiance of turn-of-the-century New York in which the Porter titles are situated. Yet in sixty minutes, sixteen complete Porter movies were included, including *The Execution of Czolgosz* (1901).

When a Polish anarchist, Leon Czolgosz, was electrocuted at Auburn State Prison for McKinley's murder, Porter staged a reenactment—first panning the real site, then dissolving into an interior studio reconstruction. The condemned man walks to his death. In a following shot, the electric chair is first tested with Edison light bulbs. The act of joining actual exterior with studio interior appeals to a new level of narrative coding: the establishing shot anticipates a story's "beginning." Earlier, such a sequencing would have been expressed in one image, as in *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* or *Arrival of Express at Lyons.* In these single-shot examples, the initial image, devoid of "action," establishes a setting which then becomes itself occupied by an event. Instead, Porter punctuates the story's unfolding with cuts, shifting locations in the process.

Enacted in ten scenes, Porter's *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1902) simulates the sequencing of lantern slide sets, like those still handled by businessmen who were now distributing Edison films. In fact, lantern slide sets now encompassed not only popular songs of the day (accompanied live in music halls by hawkers like Jack Warner), but traditional melodrama, children's stories, "classics," and topicals. Like that of political cartoons and comics, the staging of the slide shows bears remarkable similarity to equivalent films in terms of both composition and narrative structure (flashbacks, parallel constructions). Familiar with such expository techniques (which of course existed in stereoscopic slide sets and literature as well), movie spectators brought with them a kind of narrative prescience. The meaning of a story's design was readily apparent, it was so anchored in a reservoir of popular culture.

Unlike the other media's static graphics, however, movies were themselves creating new problems of frame-to-frame continuity. A comic strip might suggest movement but it could not literalize it; spliced or not, projected pictures replaced one another at a constant

Publicity still for TERRIBLE TEDDY THE GRIZZLY KING *(from* BEFORE THE NICKELODEON)

rate. If a character departed from the frame, his reappearance in the next shot had somehow to be rationalized in terms of acceptable conventions. The alternative was confusion. An undated recollection quoted in *Before the Nickelodeon* has Porter describe his new fascination with the idea of pictures "telling a story in continuity form."

Where two film shots abut, the second describing a space either contiguous with or altogether different from the first, we are required to read a narrative relationship between them. In the days when a socially conscious projectionist could make himself editor, Musser suggests that he might, for example, juxtapose views of Fifth Avenue and Lower East Side pushcarts. Twenty years later, such a rhetorical manipulation as this was refined by Vertov and Eisenstein, but by then the Russians were in a position to play against firmly ensconced audience anticipations. In Porter's time, the problem of how to get from one shot to another while time ran on uninterruptedly became a matter of no little moment. Did shot 2 *immediately* follow shot 1 as one second follows another? If time was ellipsized was the fracture significant? For example, Jack climbs the beanstalk and exits in the middle of the upper frame line. Next he enters, mid-lower frame line, i.e., crawling up into the frame. By today's measure, the shots "match." We care not at all that the lower frame beanstalk could hardly adjoin what it followed; logically, Jack cannot reenter a space he already occupies.

Musser undertakes this matter of goings and comings next. His argument runs as follows. Impressed with Méliès (Edison was selling prints of *A Trip to the Moon* in 1902), Porter attacked the problem of shot-to-shot contiguities as these connected apparently continuous movement. Méliès's rocket ship plops into the eye of the man in the moon. Immediately following, moonside, the ship lands once again and its passengers disembark. Similarly in Porter's *How They Do Things on the Bowery* (1902), a hayseed is dealt a Mickey Finn and robbed. Porter has the bartender pitch the mark and his suitcase out of the saloon. Then (exterior) the action is repeated, viewed from the sidewalk. In like vein, in the Library of Congress version of *Life of an American Fireman* (produced 1902, copyrighted 1903), the fireman first carries out his rescue in interior, then repeats it in exterior. Doctored by an unknown, later editor, the commoner Museum of Modern Art version of *Fireman* distorted history by "modernizing" this continuity.

Musser argues that Méliès and Porter overlapped events across their splices because contemporary audiences would have failed to understand straightahead continuity. I'm not so sure. Had the moon scene commenced with

the rocket landed, would anyone have been confused? Mightn't the Bowery victim quite as easily have been shown sitting on the sidewalk beside his suitcase? Elsewhere[1] Musser argues this issue more convincingly by proposing that whatever its 1902 context, film shots still clung to the autonomy of separate lantern slides, just as a Lumière film might have been understood as a moving photograph. To put it another way, the Edison Company could have sold "Bartender Ejects Rube from Bowery Saloon" and "Bowery Bar Victim Viewed In Extremis by Passersby" either separately or as a unit (although they didn't). Where space and time collide, time gives way. If, however, cuts are axial, where shot 2 amplifies the field of shot 1, we have several likely examples of matched cuts, sometimes inexact but hardly visibly redundant: *The Little Doctors* (G. A. Smith 1901), *Life Rescue at Long Branch* (1901), *Caught in the Undertow* (American Mutoscope and Biograph 1902). Porter did it himself in *Gay Shoe Clerk* (1903). Arguably, of course, whether such early matches are accidental or intentional is anybody's guess. In Porter's 1904 *The Strenuous Life; or, Anti-Race Suicide,* the father of quadruplets gesticulates an infant's scale weight. Then he repeats the hand movements in close-up, but maybe he *means* to repeat. (This one is further confused because the father's passage from foyer to living room suggests continuous time while reversing screen directions! It's not in *Before the Nickelodeon*).

During the next half-dozen years, Porter made a wide variety of films for Edison, some showing different expository devices, e.g., matching angles and cutting on action (*Maniac Chase,* 1904), functional lighting (*The Seven Ages,* 1905), pan following action (*The White Caps,* 1905), expressionist stylization (*Dream of a Rarebit Fiend,* 1906), special effects (*The Teddy Bears,* 1907). Like these, many Porter titles enacted later than what is in *Before the Nickelodeon* are available in a series Musser assembled for the Museum of Modern Art. In *Before the Nickelodeon,* Porter's work is framed by segments of *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), and the post-*Robbery* years are telescoped. Musser quickly explains Porter's dismissal by Edison in 1909 in terms of the director's disinclination to tolerate assembly-line production methods or to accommodate new "dominant narrative" storytelling conventions, and such an ending comfortably situates Porter esthetically and emotionally in the film's depicted years.

Before the Nickelodeon adopts interesting narrative strategies of its own. Sequences are separated with intertitles ("PORTER TAKES A NEW JOB," "PORTER STARTS TO TELL STORIES," "PORTER SHOWS FILMS IN GOTHAM"). Silent films were rarely silent, and here voices, gunshots, blows, footsteps and wind are replicated with sound effects, as these used to occur behind the screen. Period music supports the visuals.

Today early film is subject to increasing attention. Historians are using its evidence to rewrite both its own period and what followed. Experimentalists look to these roots in search of movie "essences," its phonemes. In *Before the Nickelodeon* scholars and filmmakers enact (voice only) some of the old written records. Jay Leyda is Thomas Edison. Robert Sklar recounts Porter's naval record. Robert Rosen describes the Koster and Bial Vitascope première. Don Pennebaker describes film's short-term, self-appointed role as a "visual newspaper." Milos Forman explains the capture of the Biddle Brothers (another Porter title). Louis Malle reads from a Méliès catalogue. Robert Altman does a promo for *Jack and the Beanstalk.* Eighty-seven, Blanche Sweet speaks the narration overall. (She started with Biograph herself, not Edison).

Results of these undertakings are mixed. Sweet's assured, though old voice carries the authority of personal experience. Varying in skill, other commentators sometimes fall below her professionalism, reading instead of speaking their lines. Intertitles insinuate a period tone, leavened by a pinch of affectionate irony ("PORTER GETS A BREAK"). The music stems largely from handsomely reproduced Edison cylinders, mostly symphonic bands performing light classics like *William Tell.* A vibratoless alto saxophone tongues *Flight of the Bumble Bee.* Sometimes sound and picture coincide, as when the McKinley funeral is supported by *Nearer My God to Thee.* Elsewhere, one may sometimes wonder whether, for example, a ragtime audience for *Poet and Peasant* would have been the same people who went to see *Appointment*

By Telephone (1902).

Finally, there is the question of whether Porter may be undergoing a kind of unintentional canonization, viewed so isolated from his contemporaries—most, like James Williamson, Ferdinand Zecca or Cecil Hepworth, here unmentioned. Redressing the balances, however, is a task for any other historian with the guts to make films. *Before the Nickelodeon* is a witty, loving, knowledgeable, evocative, evidentiary movie. In sixty minutes it demonstrates more than can be argued effectively through chapters of prose or hours of lecture. The film deserves a place in university libraries.

Largely executed by a photographer, Elizabeth Lennard, the movie's color deserves a final comment. In its opening moments, *Nickelodeon* exploits shots from *The Great Train Robbery* where prints were once spotted with hand color for special effect: gunshot smoke, blasting the baggage-car trunk open. Thereafter, black and white archival footage alternates with blue intertitles and period photographs that have been colored by Lennard. These pictures blend with the *Robbery's* rosy smoke. They evoke family album painted photos and four-color rotary press Hearst Sunday comics. At the same time, Lennard's effects suggest modernist collage, with color like Borowozyk's *Dom* or Lenica's *Monsieur Tête:* a marvelous nexus of then and now.

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The Year's Film Books

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Autobiographies and Biographies

SOMETHING LIKE AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

By Akira Kurosawa. Translated by Audie E. Bock. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982. $15.00.

When a revered director who has characteristically avoided public discussion of his work and himself reverses his attitude and publishes an autobiography, it is a momentous, welcomed occasion. Throughout his career Kurosawa has preferred to let his films speak for him. Only in recent years has he granted interviews, and only then to a select few. According to Kurosawa, what prompted this memoir was his learning that Jean Renoir had written one and his regret that John Ford had not: "Of course, compared to these two illustrious masters, Renoir and Ford, I am no more than a little chick. But if many people are saying they want to know what sort of person I am, it is probably my duty to write something for them." His decision may also reflect his distinctive desire to retain total control in answer-

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ing, in his own manner, the myriad questions and requests for interviews.

So, at age 72, Kurosawa offers this *semi*-autobiography (it ends with the release of *Rashomon* in 1950, leaving the last 30 years, hopefully, for some subsequent volume). This limitation is something of a disappointment, since many later but important works (*Seven Samurai, Ikiru, Yojimbo, Dersu Uzala* and *Kagemusha*) are mentioned merely in passing, when at all. Nor is there reflection on his mid-career commercial failures or the mental state that led to his suicide attempt in 1971. His American translator, Audie E. Bock, explains in her preface that Kurosawa still feels too close to the events of the last 30 years to write about them.

Nevertheless, the book can be appreciated for what the director has chosen to reveal: his earliest recollections of infancy through student years, ending with his leap to international prominence—all complemented by his comments on Japanese culture and identity. In describing himself as a child, Kurosawa recalls being a slow learner, a crybaby who was dubbed "Mr. Gumdrop," and a prankster who was physically weak, academically mediocre and somewhat effeminate, the last a disgraceful trait for a descendent of a great samurai family. Kurosawa also judges himself harshly in recounting the events surrounding the suicide at age 27 of an older brother, a sibling who had once been a tormentor, but later a protector and mentor.

Kurosawa offers a list of nearly 100 films he saw from the impressionable ages from 9 to 19. But he was a painter in his teenage years, and viewed the world not through a lens but through the eyes of Cézanne and Van Gogh. By his early twenties, however, he abandoned painting and also ended a trendy flirtation with the communist youth movement (although he still professes an attraction for socialist doctrine). In 1935, searching for direction, Kurosawa answered a classified ad for assistant directors at PCL studios (which grew into Toho), a "chance" inquiry that led him into the film industry.

In the second half of the book, Kurosawa fondly recalls his tutelage under director Kajiro Yamamoto and the production of his own first ten films as a director. At the beginning of this section he acknowledges, to an extent, his tyrannical reputation on the set, noting his "congenital defects" of short temper and stubbornness—"fireworks displays, but that's all it is."

Kurosawa also addresses the conflicts that split Toho and the greater conflict that changed his nation, painfully noting his passivity during the war years. Interestingly, the director who criticized the American-inspired postwar bureaucracy in *Ikiru* and the insanity of nuclear warfare in *Record of a Living Being* offers an affirmative nod to the Occupation censors, who were far preferable to the Japanese propaganda machine of the early forties. The dictates and powerplays of the war and postwar years and the labor troubles that ensued directly thereafter overshadowed Kurosawa's early films and command the attention of his descriptions of them.

His recollections include parenthetical anecdotes, but noteworthy tales of production, too: the inspirations for and troubles with scripts, his initial use of musical counterpoint, his innovations with cinematography. More personal reminiscences are also interjected, including his strange courting of his wife and his initial amazement on seeing a passionate young actor named Mifune. He ends his autobiography on a high note—his capturing the Grand Prix at the Venice Film Festival, thus bringing Japanese cinema to the world's attention.

Kurosawa's writing, like his scripts, is sometimes sentimental; the cuts are quick and his focus ever-changing. Students and scholars who expect some singular philosophy to emerge from these pages may be dissatisfied with his autobiographical installment, but his self-portrait is sensitive, frank and fascinating.

—ALAN JAFFE

Caesar, Sid, with Bill Davidson. *Where Have I Been? An Autobiography.* New York: Crown, 1982. $12.95. Anybody who has seen *My Favorite Year* should have a special interest in Caesar, the model for that film's menacingly erratic but immensely talented comic. Actually most of the book is about Caesar's long struggle with booze and pills, and his triumphant (and moving) recapture of control over what had appeared to be a totally ruined life. His own account is intermixed with comments by his long-suffering wife and children, and gives many delightful snippets from his comedy routines, along with glimpses of how they were conceived in the heady company of writers Woody

ing, in his own manner, the myriad questions and requests for interviews.

So, at age 72, Kurosawa offers this *semi*-autobiography (it ends with the release of *Rashomon* in 1950, leaving the last 30 years, hopefully, for some subsequent volume). This limitation is something of a disappointment, since many later but important works (*Seven Samurai, Ikiru, Yojimbo, Dersu Uzala* and *Kagemusha*) are mentioned merely in passing, when at all. Nor is there reflection on his mid-career commercial failures or the mental state that led to his suicide attempt in 1971. His American translator, Audie E. Bock, explains in her preface that Kurosawa still feels too close to the events of the last 30 years to write about them.

Nevertheless, the book can be appreciated for what the director has chosen to reveal: his earliest recollections of infancy through student years, ending with his leap to international prominence—all complemented by his comments on Japanese culture and identity. In describing himself as a child, Kurosawa recalls being a slow learner, a crybaby who was dubbed "Mr. Gumdrop," and a prankster who was physically weak, academically mediocre and somewhat effeminate, the last a disgraceful trait for a descendent of a great samurai family. Kurosawa also judges himself harshly in recounting the events surrounding the suicide at age 27 of an older brother, a sibling who had once been a tormentor, but later a protector and mentor.

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Allen, Mel Brooks, Neil Simon, Larry Gelbart, Carl Reiner, *et al.* E.C.

Downing, David. *Robert Redford.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983. $11.95, paper. A comprehensive and not uncritical look at the career of a durable actor who has been around a lot longer than most people remember (since *War Hunt,* 1962) and will probably be around longer, as a director, than most people would presently predict. —E.C.

Fonda, Henry. *Fonda: My Life.* As told to Howard Teichmann. New York: New American Library, 1981. The actor's much-discussed, modest and candid confessions. I was interested in a new version of the fight with John Ford during *Mr. Roberts.* According to Fonda, a drunk Ford unexpectedly knocked him down and Fonda refused to respond. —J.F.

Fussell, Betty Harper. *Mabel: Hollywood's First I-Don't-Care Girl.* New Haven & New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1982. $15.95. Fussell attempts to give a sub-*Kane* search structure to her Mabel Normand biography, tracking the charming and elusive Mabel through dilapidated artifacts and the biased memories of a few survivors. Normand was a creative gag inventor, a sometime director, the lover of Mack Sennett and a friend of Fatty Arbuckle and William Desmond Taylor. Though there was always something innocent about her, she kept getting embroiled in sensational cases and died early, of tuberculosis. Normand was enchanting on the screen, but her work gets short shrift amid Fussell's sensational anecdotes. —E.C.

Hoopes, Roy. *Cain: The Biography of James M. Cain.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1982. $25.00. Although he was the author of three novels which resulted in classic films, Cain's career as a Hollywood screenwriter was peculiarly inconclusive. Nonetheless, he rather liked the place, while he wrote his novels and stories. Hoopes's almost-700-page biography is a readable, perceptive labor of love which gives some idea of the personality and life which produced *The Postman Always Rings Twice, Serenade, Double Indemnity,* and *Mildred Pierce.* —E.C.

Keaton, Buster with Charles Samuels. *My Wonderful World of Slapstick.* New York: Da Capo Paperback. 1982. $7.95 paper. Keaton's autobiography has now luckily been reissued, with an introduction by Dwight Macdonald and a revealing filmography (including his post-sound work) by Raymond Rohauer. This wry, unassuming account of his life is must reading for all Keaton fans. It's sometimes terribly touching—e.g., in the way he ends his account of how he lost control of his work at Metro to the accountants and departments ("My Worst Mistake") with a little anecdote about his St. Bernard dog befriending Garbo at the studio. You would probably never guess, if all you knew of Keaton was this book, that the man was one of the greatest artists ever to touch a camera; and there is some satisfyingly Keatonian mystery in that. —E.C.

Lewis, Jerry with Herb Gluck. *Jerry Lewis: In Person.* New York: Atheneum, 1982. $14.95. More than 20 years after being canonized by the French, Jerry Lewis remains a film-maker over whom one chooses sides. Neutrality disintegrates in the face of the intensity of Lewis's performance and directorial style, an appeal which finds its inverse in the sincere Jerry of telethon fame. His autobiography attempts to reconcile these warring personas, but the real center of the drama lies elsewhere—between the humor and the pathos emerges his painfully romantic association with Dean Martin. If Lewis lacks the kind of self-critical perspective that would warm his champions' hearts, if his story suffers from the absence of his characters' outrageousness, he does succeed in revealing the startling passion behind the most important relationship in his life. Straight-man, business associate, confidant, brother-figure, it is Martin alone who drags Lewis's attention away from himself and keeps it long after their partnership dissolves. Lewis's love for him hangs over the whole book, and at times it even reads like tragedy.

—EDWARD SIKOV

McCambridge, Mercedes. *The Quality of Mercy.* New York. Times Books, 1981. There's relatively little Hollywood gossip here: the size of Joan Crawford's foot, William Friedkin's untrustworthiness. What remains is a literate, ingratiating, personally executed autobiography that paints a candid picture of performing for the mass media in the period from World War II until now. —J.F.

McGilligan, Patrick. *Cagney.* San Diego: Barnes, 1982. $12.95. *Ragtime* has caused the publishers to have McGilligan update his 1975 study of one of our leading actor-auteurs. Much intriguing material on the detail work in Cagney's performances. E.C.

Olivier, Sir Laurence. *Confessions of an Actor: An Autobiography.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982. $16.95. Written with the charm and urbanity you would expect, this volume also includes many painful aspects of the great actor's life. There are not many revelations about the film side of his life (what he cared about passionately was the theater), but there are small, tantalizing asides: Vivien Leigh got $20,000 as Scarlett, and upon reviewing it much later Olivier decided that despite the miseries of working with Marilyn Monroe, *The Prince and the Showgirl* was really a very nice little film. E.C.

Pero, Taylor and Rovin, Jeff, *Always Lana.* New York: Bantam, 1982, $3.50. Turner's secretary-lover of ten years tells almost all. Either Pero or his co-author has a nice sense of humor ("It was surprisingly refreshing to get back to a life of unrelieved boredom in Los Angeles") and seems to have had a genuine affection for his difficult employer, though their attempt to mix business and love produced the predictable disasters. —E.C.

Schatt, Roy. *James Dean: A Portrait.* New York: Delilah Books, 1982. $8.95. Schatt knew Dean well *circa* 1954, when he was becoming famous, and taught him photography as well as taking many

well known shots of him. The book contains many photos by Dean, and an intelligently nostalgic text by Schatt. A heartbreaker for the worldwide Dean cult. —E.C.

Criticism

CINEMA AND SENTIMENT

By Charles Affron. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. $20.00.

Affron's subject is cinematic affect, or, as his alliterative title has it, cinema and sentiment, the powerful emotions that are often our most indelible impression of a film. In the past, the emotional effects of directors such as Griffith or Borzage have either been ignored or excused for the sake of their other achievements in the advancement of film art. The result has often been an awkward divorce of form and content: Griffith is studied for his narrative innovations while the emotions these narratives elicit are simply ignored. Borzage is praised for his lyrical moods but excused for his improbably pathetic stories. Yet both directors achieved what they did because of their commitment to the same melodramatic emotions that now seem to need some excuse. That Affron can choose to isolate for study the very sentiments that have so often been ignored is, in many ways, a measure of the distance film studies has traveled in recent years. That he goes on to celebrate these same sentiments, as if they were aesthetically redeemed, or purified, by their cinematic form, is perhaps a measure of how far we still have to go.

Certainly the movies, like the stage melodramas they have largely superceded, have long been a source of powerful and usually uncritical spectatorial emotions. In *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976), literary critic Peter Brooks has argued that what has often been most maligned in melodrama—its excessive emotional pathos, its simplistic polarities of good/evil, light/dark, salvation/damnation—is really the root of a vitality that has dominated bourgeois art from the overblown theatrics of the post-revolutionary French stage melodrama proper to the work of melodramatic novelists as diverse as Balzac and Henry James. Brooks' rehabilitation of melodrama has thus embraced, rather than excused, the powerful emotions, moral polarities and metaphorical forms of expression typical of the genre.

Even before Brooks, Thomas Elsaesser's 1972 essay, "Tales of Sound and Fury," pioneered the cinematic investigation of the genre. Elsaesser establishes the continuity between the melodramatic qualities for which American cinema is best known—its one-dimensional characters, plottiness, spectacle and emotional effect—and its literary and stage antecedents. Reaching both farther back and farther afield than Brooks for the roots of the genre, Elsaesser goes on to find a special kind of fruition in the wide screen technicolor emotional extravaganzas of American melodrama of the fifties.

There are, of course, many other excellent critics of melodrama, in film, literature, theater and television. If I mention these two key figures here it is in order to suggest an important limitation of Affron's approach. For Affron has chosen not to formulate his topic within the parameters of the growing discourse on the melodramatic imagination in general or the melodramatic in cinema in particular. He acknowledges Brooks' work (though not, unfortunately, Elsaesser's), but somewhat rashly rejects its generic definition as insufficient to the specifics of the medium and "the specular activity it elicits" (p. 14). Instead, Affron argues that the dynamics of this specular activity—identification with an image, framing, editing, penetration of an illusion of deep space—breathes a life and individuality into the schematized polarities of classic melodrama that transcends its moral typage.

Thus, for example, the illusion of reality of Lillian Gish's fragile hand in the icy water of a real river in D.W. Griffith's *Way Down East* transcends the artifice and schematism of the popular stage melodrama on which the film is based. By such reasoning, Affron both upholds the critical dismissal of melodrama as lacking the profundity of tragedy, while denying Griffith, and the cinema, any continuity with a vital tradition of bourgeois art.

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In place of this tradition Affron chooses to consider cinematic affect as manifestations of the formal representational elements of the

medium alone. How does the cinema represent, and elicit from spectators, affective response? In answer Affron proposes to consider the special status of the film image, calling upon recent psychoanalytic film theory to describe the many effects contributing to the unity of the spectator-subject. But there is a tension between the elements of this theory and Affron's use of it. Psychoanalytic theory aims at unmasking the ultimate fiction of the unified subject and the ideology that underlies it. Affron, however, celebrates both spectatorial and textual unity and never investigates ideology. For example, he writes that the activities of film viewing

> force us to transcend our ideologies and our most cherished censuring mechanisms. Legions of viewers and critics proclaim their abhorrence of the politics of Ford and Capra films, to say nothing of Leni Riefenstahl's *The Triumph of the Will,* yet willingly submit, and repeatedly resubmit, to these films' emotional resonance. We reject the "calvary" ethic, the pie-in-the sky populism, the nazi mythology; we respond to the modes of their conveyance. These modes do not necessarily force viewers to subscribe to the values of the fictive worlds they depict. What happens is often quite the contrary precisely because films invite us to perceive them in the purity of their fictional status, and often therefore to respond to an emotional dynamics whose pressure far exceeds that of uniforms, emblems, speeches, mere signs. (p. 12)

If we agree with Affron that the emotional dynamics of such films exceed the "uniforms, emblems, speeches" that accompany them, it then becomes all the more important to examine the connections between ideology and emotion. Emotional resonance cannot be so easily dissociated from the ideology it expresses. It is simplistic to think that we can reject abhorrent, unpopular or merely passé ideologies when we embrace or enjoy their accompanying emotions. On the contrary, there is an obvious connection between, for example, Capra's filmic attempts to demonstrate the salvation offered by a populist ethic and the emotional excesses of his films. The more difficult it becomes to believe realistically in a populist salvation, the more emotional and fantastic Capra's populist cycle of films becomes, with *It's a Wonderful Life* offering his most desperate emotional compensation for the actual failure of the populist dream. Affron has many interesting things to say about this film but his insistence that modes of emotional conveyance can "transcend" ideology ultimately limits the depth of his analysis.

A case in point is Affron's discussion of two key scenes from the end of King Vidor's *Stella Dallas.* Throughout the film, Barbara Stanwyk's Stella, portrayed as an ambitious lower-class-woman-on-the-make, passes through various stages of vulgar self-display that contrast with the upper middle class restraint of other characters. In the first scene in question Stella self-consciously re-enacts her earlier vulgarity in front of her daughter to force her daughter to reject both herself and her lower class origins and marry into a better position. Stella thus self-consciously and self-destructively stages the vulgarity that she once naturally flaunted, hiding her maternal love for her daughter behind the mask of a selfish, uncaring "bad" mother. Only by pretending to be a bad mother can she become the selfless good one. This mask is then dropped at the film's climax when Stella becomes an excluded spectator watching her daughter's wedding through the window of the upper class home Stella herself will never enter. Here, Stella finally shows her real feelings, her love for her daughter and her triumph in her daughter's social success.

These two scenes are justly privileged as heart-wrenching examples of the cinema's ability to make us emotionally believe in actions that are logically absurd. Affron succinctly and cogently describes the opposition of concealment and display that makes Stella's outrageous sacrifice work as cinematic (melo)drama. But he can go no farther than to celebrate the achievement of a fiction that "collects all our vision at her [Stella's] concealment." He never examines the underlying purposes of such a display, to see how and why masochistic self-sacrifice is transformed into the ultimate triumph of maternity.

We are left wondering what is the function of the emotions Affron so compellingly describes and celebrates. This problem runs throughout many of Affron's otherwise exellent analyses, whether of John Ford's *How Green Was My Valley,* Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* or Frank Borzage's *History Is Made At Night*—all films that cry out for an understanding of the ideological work performed by emotion. To this extent the book is as limited by its compulsion to rehabilitate sentimental cinema as earlier studies

were by their determination to rehabilitate cinema by ignoring its sentiments.

Nevertheless, I find it possible to excuse the theoretical limitations of this book for the sake of the genuine love and enthusiasm Affron generates for his subject and for the close formal analyses that make so much of it a pleasure to read. Despite its psychoanalytic and deconstructive terminology *Cinema and Sentiment* is really an excellent example of the kind of detailed humanistic form/content analysis aimed at demonstrating the unity of a work that used to flourish under new criticism. Film study still benefits from such analysis especially when it offers sustained and nuanced readings of a wide range of films that do not always form part of the auteurist pantheon. And, as is fitting a "new critical" approach, *Cinema and Sentiment* is generously illustrated with the visual quotation of frame enlargements rather than stills (though unfortunately these enlargements are not labelled or adequately referred to in the text). What is more, Affron's fine attention to the details of filmic expression—to the quality of Jimmy Stewart's voice and accent in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (a film that is about the very voice of democracy), to the earned stardom of Judy Garland's performing vs. the empty icons of the anonymous "Ziegfeld Girls," to the slow pacing of much deep focus narrative—consistently rewards any reader concerned with these films.

In a chapter entitled "Depth of Feeling," for example, Affron analyzes the nature of affect in films that use deep focus photography to enhance the illusion of fictional depth. Although the connections Affron establishes between deep feeling and deep space are fundamentally plays on words, his analysis of the many homecomings in Wyler's *The Best Years of Our Lives* pushes the notion of literal and metaphorical depth to yield excellent insights into this classic film. As Affron demonstrates, the film is about physical and emotional reconnection figured in a homecoming embrace, the grasping of the tired, wounded, even amputated, bodies of the returning servicemen by the complex world they left behind. Affron here shows that there is a constant play of flatness and depth in both the figuring of these bodies and in the emotional resonance of the homecoming itself.

Cinema and Sentiment is, finally, an anomaly. While paying lip service to the major trends in semiotic, psychoanalytic and deconstructive criticism, it actually *does* new criticism; while ignoring the historical and ideological function of melodrama it nonetheless offers close readings of distinctly melodramatic works. Read with an eye to its limitations and in conjunction with these other approaches it is a rewarding work.

—LINDA WILLIAMS

PROFANE MYTHOLOGY

By Yvette Biro. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. $22.50 cloth, $7.95 paper.

Profane Mythology is a mixed bag of delights and banalities. The latter include laborious "proofs" that film works on us in nonverbal ways that go beyond logic and that Antonioni's trilogy is about modern urban alienation. Elsewhere, Biró tricks up the obvious in flashy verbiage that is only superficially stimulating.

Happily, however, the delights far outweigh the banalities and the sometimes overly nuanced prose often contains *aperçus* that help us understand the medium in a fresh way. Biró convincingly demonstrates, for example, film's power to dissolve the traditional dualities of concrete and abstract, emotional and intellectual, though she does not pursue the deconstructive implications of this demonstration. She also authoritatively marshalls the recent findings of cognitive psychology—while almost obsessively avoiding psychoanalysis—to illuminate just how it is we perceive and create meanings through film. For her, "film thought" is remarkably close to the thinking of children and so-called primitive people, and what these "modes of sensory, emotionally oriented thought" have in common is their inevitable movement toward the production of myth, the central focus of her book.

Generally, *Profane Mythology* can be seen as a reworking of Siegfried Kracauer's notion of film as the redemption (for Biró, through myth) of physical reality. Thus, she spends many fresh and lively pages outlining the nevertheless rather familiar view of cinema's proclivity for the everyday and the palpably present. What she means especially to show is "how customs and gestures of everyday life become ceremonial on the screen; how they

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acquire mythical dimensions by being presented and distributed in the medium of film" (p. 101).

This fresh attention to film's obvious affinity to real life, however, and the consequent privileging of it over other media in the depiction of the real, is dangerous as well. What this ultimately phenomenological attitude wants to forget, of course, is that in spite of appearances, film is itself always only a *representation* of the real, a manufactured construct, a product of human consciousness—and as such, culturally and ideologically determined. Despite its immediacy, in other words, film reality is never simply and unproblematically *given*. Of course, Biró is too sophisticated a thinker not to realize this: thus, for her neither the narrative nor the iconic structure of a film "is a direct imprint or natural copy of reality . . . [but] the results of personal selection, reflections of a subjective articulation of viewpoints." (p. 33) But this is the same kind of distinction that Bazin made, and does not ever consider the more profound mediations of ideology that go far beyond the obvious vagaries of the film-maker's individual mindset. For Biró, the cinema as conveyer of the real transcends these private mediations. She insists that film has a role to play in the "practical-sociological aspects of this world," and even further, that it "has developed the optimal technical conditions for world integration." (p. 76) The myth that escapes Biró but is clearly at work here is the myth of the neutrality of technique. The political implications are obvious: what she forgets in her celebration of cinema as provider of a communal mythos is how much of the dominant ideology is at work in this "innocent" mythicizing. Quoting William James on the plurality of the world at the very end of her book, Biró offers the cinema as the chronicler of this excess; for her "its concreteness and reifying nature . . . faithfully reflect and communicate the dialectic of the unity of divergence. Things remain things with a life of their own, and through this never-to-be-caught self and reality, they signal what is beyond. . . . This invitation is perhaps the most convincing proof of film's transcendence." (p. 133) What this intense book ultimately demonstrates, unfortunately, is how close the mythic and the mystifying really are. —PETER BRUNETTE

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WOMEN ON FILM
The Critical Eye

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McCreadie is an earnest student of her subject; she has read her writers carefully, interviewed some of them, and looked into the background of all. She dutifully catalogues and summarizes their approaches, peccadilloes, and receptions from friends and foes, with generous quotations all around. Her descriptions are, as the phrase goes, unexceptionable. And yet, and yet—one constantly misses the nuance and passion and intelligence of the writers themselves, which have somehow evaded McCreadie. Unnervingly, her book is full of small references that are somehow just

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slightly "off" about background or context. None that I have spotted are in any way fatal, but they do not inspire confidence. McCreadie blithely has Anaïs Nin crediting John Simon for inventing the concept of the "chamber film" (not his fault, of course); she refers to *Flaming Creatures* as a "pop pornographic film," and says the assumptions underlying Powdermaker's anthropological study of Hollywood "may seem Jungian or McLuhanesque." She has *Camera Obscura* being "founded in Los Angeles" (it was a Berkeley product). None of these are dreadful blunders, but they would not be written by someone with a really penetrating grasp of the issues and personalities and films involved.

McCreadie's conclusions will probably make feminists uneasy, since she relies on some recent experimental psychology work which she considers to establish that women are "more sensitive to music, to certain visual stimulus [sic], and to social interchange. They are more visually sensitive in the dark, better at facial recognition and more responsive to faces, . . . and more field dependent than men are. Applied to film criticism, this suggests the strong perception of part to whole [sic] and may be the cognitive underpinning for the concept of a performer as auteur . . ." Such muddled passages, where the services of a competent editor were badly needed, are rare in the book, but they do tend to come at crucial points in the argument. What remains of most value is the volume's industrious accumulation of biographical and background information, and its introduction to contemporary readers of critics who are too little known today. —ERNEST CALLENBACH

MOVIES PLUS ONE
Seven Years of Film Reviewing

By William S. Pechter. New York: Horizon Press, 1982. $14.95.

Reading a collection of film reviews is a peculiar experience. The question arises as to what sort of satisfaction one anticipates from a record of years in the dark, primal screenings, losses at the movies. There is, of course, the jogging of personal cinematic memory that occurs as one shuffles through such verbal snapshots of someone else's film experience—but the appeal to memory is casual and disordered. Then, there is the encounter with the reviewer. Through a collection, over time and revelations of taste and tone, one gets to know a particular voice—but the movies themselves can seem, on occasion, simply a pretext for the emergence of a personality. Finally, there is the possibility of enlightenment—but it is of a particular and limited kind. The brevity and discontinuity of collected film reviews allows us to hope, not for the steady illumination of criticism and scholarship, but only for the occasional intensity of insight.

William Pechter, however, reminds us of yet another and deeper satisfaction such collections can provide. This second volume of his film reviews (the first, *Twenty-four Times a Second,* was published in 1971) gives us a renewed sense of wonder at the diversity and complexity that accrues to the medium across the individual reviewer's experience. Pechter, while never self-effacing, has humility before the power of films to move us, to be always more and less than they or we intend. What interests Pechter most about the films he sees is that about them which cannot be reduced: their complex and paradoxical excess. He tells us: "Probably, more than any other medium, film has an autonomous life of its own: a life of sensuousness and suggestiveness overflowing all those thematic models within which film-makers may think to contain it." He is also skeptical of scholarly containment, and the academy's pretense to science. Pechter is against "methodological keys" which would construct monolithic unity from the medium's diversity, flux, and incommensurable works. Indeed, Pechter is rather phenomenological in approach—probing the structures and relation of his own experience to the films he sees and refusing to ignore that experience's dialectical and ambiguous nature.

It is Pechter's willingness to explore his experience without resorting to a sloppy subjectivity or falling into a critical egotism which overshadows the films that makes his book so interesting at its best. Rather, he works from his experience to reveal the structures of power certain films have over us. Discussing the legitimization of pornography by *Deep Throat* and relating it to the strange inauthenticity he senses in *Last Tango in Paris,* he is not afraid to probe his own sexual desires and responses, to trust himself as a human being, and so he

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Although there is only one occasion in the collection when he discusses the genre, Pechter is particularly fine on the musical and its modern transformations. Again, speaking from his own experience, he finds the genre "aristocratic." He says: "De Sica and others have demonstrated that everyone is a potential film actor, but no one's gone very far with the democratic proposition that anyone can sing and dance (and it's largely a consciousness of the musical performer's special gifts that accounts, I think, for the exclusion one feels from the world of musicals and, for me, the faint letdown I often experience at their conclusion, on being thrust from contemplation of so appealing but self-contained a fantasy world out into the prosaic streets)."

Pechter also does some fine analyses of various directors across the breadth of several reviews. He comes to terms with Robert Altman from *M*A*S*H* to *Three Women,* deciding that the director's films exceed him, that at their best they "derive their richness not from their ostensible text of ironic and moralistic myth-debunking but from their less-than-conscious subtext of a yearning for and fantasy of community." Although he has a disaffinity for Stanley Kubrick, and perhaps finally cannot see past the director's Swiftian and cold passion (he titles his two reviews "Fire and Ice" and "Pale Fire, Dry Ice"), he is always relevant in his descriptions. Finally, he has a great deal worth reading about Sam Peckinpah and is particularly astute (meaning I agree with him) when he says: "Style in *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia* is less a matter of artistic finesse than a kind of moral commitment, a way of looking at and acting in the world."

The satisfactions I find in Pechter's collection also have their source in style as moral commitment and in a particular way of looking at and acting in the world. He has a moral commitment to his lived experience as a viewer who loves films, and a way of looking at the world which illuminates the medium rather more frequently than might be expected in such a collection. —VIVIAN SOBCHACK

CURRENTS IN JAPANESE CINEMA

By Tadao Sato. New York, Tokyo, and San Francisco: Kodansha International, 1982.

After decades of criticism and chronicling of Japanese film by Western scholars it is both refreshing and necessary to get a native Japanese perspective on the subject. Tadao Satō's long-awaited inside view arrives on the heels of much recent English and French publication. From the late seventies on we have accumulated Richard Tucker's truncated introduction, *Japan: Film Image;* Joan Mellen's feminist/leftist *The Waves at Genji's Door;* Max Tessier's new genre introductions in *Le cinéma japonais au présent* and *Images du cinéma japonais;* and the rerelease of Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie's classic history, *The Japanese Film.* (There's my *Japanese Film Directors* too.)

Donald Richie has referred to Satō as the only Japanese film critic "worth the name." Indeed, while most film critics in Japan tend to dwell on what a film is not or might have been, what it reminds them of in their personal lives, or what the advertising copy tells them they should say about it, Satō has staked out a unique territory. A self-educated cultural psychologist, he devotes himself to isolating trends that express the Japanese temperament or taste. In this capacity he works less as a critic of film than as a user of film to illustrate his social analyses. This frees him to deal with the worst trash on the same level as the highest art, and to introduce a great number of films that would otherwise receive no attention outside Japan.

Satō's recognition in Japan makes it fitting that he should be the first to receive the recognition of translation into English. The original volume from which most of these essays are taken, *Nihon eiga shisō shi* (The Intellectual History of Japanese Film), has been reprinted 17 times since its first appearance in 1971. Satō has published 65 books since he first began writing on film in 1956. He also publishes a film history magazine in which an essay of his own appears in English in each semi-annual issue. In short, he is prolific and popular. The

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But sometimes Satō's passion for categorization strikes wide of the mark. In a new chapter on hero types written specially for the English-language edition of the book, he puts Toshirō Mifune and Sessue Hayakawa in the same class of strong samurai types. He calls this type by the Kabuki theater term *tateyaku,* which actually means simply "male lead," but he imposes the strong samurai image on it. I do not believe that either Hayakawa, the exotic romantic hero in stories of doomed interracial love in the American silent cinema, or the very versatile contemporary actor Mifune has taken his acting technique from anything in Kabuki. Moreover, both these actors have played the romantic roles that Satō claims are opposed to the *tateyaku* image (actually the romantic lead or *nimaime* is one type of *tateyaku*). But most importantly, I don't believe it is relevant to a Japanese type to use an actor whose ethnic and historical context is as unusual as Hayakawa's. Satō's appraisal of Mifune's acting also neglects all of his early films with Kurosawa, the subject of another of Satō's own books. If Mifune now plays the strong samurai type too often, it is because no director as good as Kurosawa is challenging his acting breadth.

If such well-intentioned superficialities and a general lack of organization and thematic unity can be overlooked, Satō's quick insights and broad categories provide much food for thought. *Currents in Japanese Cinema* should prove useful for years to come.

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overview feature production in its formative years, incidentally identifying twenty titles still available for screening. (An addendum by Koszarski bemoans other missing works and illustrates some of them with stills). Represented directors include Americans like John Emerson, Marshall Neilan, and William S. Hart (although Charles Swickard is credited for *Hell's Hinges*), and Europeans (Benjamin Christensen, Louis Feuillade, Maurice Tourneur—who came to the US in 1914). There's a Ford film (*Straight Shooting*) and some Mutual Chaplins, a Stiller (*Thomas Graal's Best Child*), a Sjöstrom (*The Outlaw and his Wife*), DeMille's *The Cheat,* and Ince's early *The Gangsters and the Girl.* Tourneur has three films. Of special interest is *Blue Jeans,* a 1917 Metro production by John Collins, who died of pneumonia a year later. The entries were prepared by a variety of film critics. Each includes credits, excerpts from period reviews, and a short essay. Most of the latter are original, although Kevin Brownlow's piece on *The Wishing Well* (Tourneur) appeared in *The American Film Heritage,* and Richard Roud recycled his *Fantomas* material into *Cinema a Critical Dictionary.* —J.F.

Orlandello, John. *O'Neill on Film.* East Brunswick, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982. $27.50. Ford's version of *The Long Voyage Home* (shot by Gregg Toland) is the most accomplished *film* made on the basis of an O'Neill play, but Lumet's *Long Day's Journey into Night,* claustrophobically confined within the Tyrone house, may paradoxically be the greater work. Aside from these, O'Neill's works were generally botched by Hollywood; Orlandello carefully traces the adaptation strategies that bowdlerized or cheapened them en route to the screen. —E.C.

Rosenzweig, Sidney. Casablanca *and Other Major Films of Michael Curtiz.* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982. $39.95. Rosenzweig rehabilitates the swashbuckler genre (for *Captain Blood, Robin Hood, The Sea Hawk,* and some related films) and then produces intelligent analyses of Curtiz's work on *Casablanca, 20,000 Years in Sing-Sing, Angels with Dirty Faces, Mildred Pierce,* etc. —E.C.

Rowe, Carel. *The Baudelairean Cinema: A Trend Within the American Avant-Garde.* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982. A scholarly but amusing brief study of the painful relationships between Jonas Mekas, who coined the term "Baudelairean Cinema," and such difficult practitioners as Jack Smith (who reportedly threatened to murder Mekas), Kenneth Anger, Ron Rice, and Andy Warhol, with excursions into the Parisian antecedents. *Flaming Creatures* is the center-piece, but many other "mad" or "decadent" films receive due attention. —E.C.

Schelly, William. *Harry Langdon.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1982. $16.00. This first book on the fourth of the great silent comedians traces the slow evolution of the "Little Elf" character, "a stranger in a strange land, reflecting the essential absurdity of our culture, our mores, and our very existence." It was a challenging project, since Langdon's basic passivity, indeed infantilism, put sharp limits on what he could do. But after escaping the Sennett influence he worked with Frank Capra and achieved three films—*Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, The Strong Man* and *Long Pants*—which will last. Schelly makes much of Harold Lloyd's admiration for Langdon, and traces his rapid rise and sad decline with sympathy, correctly pointing out the limits of Capra's influence and making a good case for Langdon's lasting place as a comic artist. Schelly is not, unfortunately, an evocative writer but his dutiful survey of Langdon's life will be useful to anyone seriously interested in American screen comedy. —E.C.

Seidman, Steve. *Comedian Comedy: A Tradition in Hollywood Film.* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981. In a consideration of the major Hollywood clowns, Seidman argues that film comedy succeeds largely by splintering the fictional worlds it constructs, exposing rather than suppressing the enunciator. By Seidman's measure, film comedy is self-referential, a counter-tendency to the dominant narrative mode, drawing on archetypal models of the trickster, the loner, the fugitive. Investigating recurrent formal elements, he finds behavior oppositions that foreground issues of the individual's relation to society. —J.F.

Simon, John. *Something to Declare: Twelve Years of Films from Abroad.* New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1983. $19.95. A 420-page collection of reviews of foreign films which appeared in various periodicals. Simon may be the critic many moviegoers love to hate, but his learned sapping of sappy pleasures is often badly needed. He is usually better writing about films he despises (perhaps partly because of the shortness of his available journalistic space) but there are a few pieces here, notably about *Scenes from a Marriage,* where we see him essay a longer, sympathetic, and more substantial treatment of a film. Simon's bias is towards films manifesting verbally paraphrasable intelligence of the kind he himself possesses; this stance leads to a great deal of pleasantly nasty wit, often directed against sacred cows: as on Buñuel's *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie:* "Why Is the Coeatus Always Interruptus?" —E.C.

Siska, William Charles. *Modernism in the Narrative Cinema: The Art Film as a Genre.* New York: Arno, 1980. Siska considers the modernist narrative, the art house movie, to be structured by a series of presumptions and formal conventions. These are, in the first case, subjectivity, point-of-view, reflexivity, and open texture. Their expository consequences are: narrative intransivity (the diminution or disappearance of linear causality), estrangement, fragmentation, multiple diegesis, intertextuality (quotations and allusions acting as significant features within the films), and aperture (the antithesis to closure). Some films are unabashedly

modernist (*Pierrot le fou*). Others operate under the guise of conventional frames (*Night Moves; Mickey One*). The author then considers extreme examples in order to highlight particular characteristics: *Mickey One* (modernist allegory),*8-1/2* (personal film), *The Last Movie* (formal reflexivity), and *Pierrot le fou* (open texture). All describe a protagonist condemned to confronting problems of self-realization. In contrast to traditional heroes, these figures exemplify their problems, rather than "living" (and resolving) them within an operative, shared value system. In contrast to most Ph.D. dissertations, which read like double acrostics, Siska's work is consistently, thoughtfully articulate. He and his Northwestern University committee (Stuart Kaminsky, Jack Ellis and the late Paddy Whannel) are to be commended. —J.F.

Slide, Anthony, ed., *Selected Film Criticism 1896–1911.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1982. $11.00. This first volume of Slide's series goes back to the years when "criticism" was barely being invented (simple plot synopses were the dominant form of notice that movies got initially, even in the embryonic trade press). Here are the reactions given to many early Griffiths, the first Lumière and Méliès imports, and a variety of other early productions. —E.C.

_____. *Selected Film Criticism 1912–1920.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1982. $18.50. This volume of Slide's series covers the years when fan magazines bloomed (some of them containing quite competent reviewing) and deals with some 200 films as written about in 15 publications including *Variety,* which improved substantially in this period, *Life,* and the *N. Y. Dramatic Mirror.* (The *N. Y. Times* had as yet made only paltry reviewing efforts.) Like the other volumes in the series, this one offers a kind of chastening contrast to the later verdicts of film history. —E.C.

_____. *Selected Film Criticism 1921–1930.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1982. $18.50. In this volume, Slide documents the growing divergence in approach between the trade journals and the general-interest magazines. Two hundred films are covered, as reviewed by 13 periodicals (and in Robert Sherwood's *Best Moving Pictures of 1922–1923*). —E.C.

_____. *Selected Film Criticism 1931–1940.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1982. $18.50 This volume covers 150 films, as reviewed in a dozen publications, including *Esquire* (whose critic was Meyer Levin, author of *Compulsion*), *Life, The Nation, The National Board of Review Magazine* (under James Shelley Hamilton), and a curious Los Angeles magazine called *Rob Wagner's Script,* which Slide describes as a kind of *New Yorker* circulating within the Hollywood community. Otis Ferguson and Richard Griffith make their appearance in this volume. —E.C.

_____. *Selected Film Criticism 1941–1950.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1983. $18.50. Covers 140 films as reviewed in a varied 16 periodicals—both trade journals and general publications. Slide terminates the series with this volume because he believes that from the fifties onward film reviewing became hopelessly longwinded: a retrograde opinion, I think, but Slide sticks to his convictions to the extent of including numerous effusions from the *New Yorker*'s execrable John McCarten, whose only discernible virtue was brevity (and that was probably forced on him by his editor, Harold Ross). —E.C.

Wilson, David ed. *Sight and Sound: A Fiftieth Anniversary Selection.* London: Faber and Faber in association with BFI Publishing (available through Harper & Row), 1982. $19.95. Wilson has selected 325 pages of the best of our oldest and most distinguished film journal, which has weathered many critical storms and will presumably go on forever. —E.C.

Witcombe, R.T.. *The New Italian Cinema.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1982. $19.95. Oxford's film book line-up gets curiouser and curiouser. This item is described by its author in the introduction as a follow-up to Pierre Leprohon's 1966 account *The Italian Cinema.* Such a follow-up would be quite useful if that were indeed the case. Alas, it is not. For in this study, which is organized by directors in somewhat arbitrary pairs (Antonioni and Ferreri, Bellochio and Cavani, Bolognini and Bertolucci, etc.), excessive space is devoted to the discussion of older films from the sixties which have for the most part already received more than their share of critical attention over the intervening years. This would be less objectionable if the book were (1) about twice as long, and (2) less polemical. Witcombe writes tolerably well, and I suppose we ought to be thankful that Oxford didn't hand over this important assignment to one of the tortured stylists who seem to rule the British Film Institute's Education Department these days. But one still wonders where film book publishers (and not just Oxford) come up with these nonentities to write what should be definitive historical texts. Witcombe's defense of the films of Liliana Cavani is no more plausible or convincing than any other we've seen (particularly his laughable attempt to fashion a silk purse out of the utterly piggish *Beyond Evil*—that's another liability: British release titles which are never correlated with their US alternates, in this case *Beyond Good and Evil*). Where, we might wonder, were Gideon Bachmann or Raymond Durgnat when this book was commissioned? In the final analysis it's no more than mildly useful and is best used in combination with Peter Bondanella's *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present* (from Ungar), but a remotely definitive study of this period has yet to be written.

—RANDOLPH MAN

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Early in 1984 the Univ. of California Press will publish Mira Liehm's *Passion and Defiance,* a history of the postwar Italian film.]

Director Studies

THE FILMS OF ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET

By Roy Armes. Philadelphia: John Benjamins (Purdue University Monographs, Vol. 6), 1982. $25.00.

Alain Robbe-Grillet became a film-maker, in some sense of that word, with the emergence of *Last Year at Marienbad,* but his own status as an *auteur* was not secured until the release of his second directorial effort in 1966, *Trans-Europe Express.* Meanwhile, his theories of the *nouveau roman* and his own modern novels had generated so much excitement and criticism that the critics quickly resorted to R-G's own theories in order to explicate his film texts or simply to translate his symbol-laden symmetry into expository prose.

Roy Armes masterfully delivers a dossier *cum* critique of R-G as film-maker in this volume of the intelligently academic series, Purdue University Monographs. His book was necessary, as the only other English-language books on R-G are the somewhat forbidding *Intertextual Assemblage in Robbe-Grillet from Topology to the Golden Triangle* (1979) by Bruce Morrissette, the author of the early *Alain Robbe-Grillet* from Columbia University Press. William F. Van Wert's *The Film Career of Alain Robbe-Grillet* (1977) offers a general introduction but does not enter the critical fray.

R-G has not been neglected. For the *auteur* of a mere nine films in 20 years, he has contributed to the quandary by publishing texts to the films (which only reveal the incompatibility of his written word and his images) and articles with titles like "Le Droit au jeu et à la volupté," or "Le Cinéma est toujours sexuel . . ." (dutifully translated by Bruce Morrissette in his work). Armes avoids drawing the conclusion but certainly implies that the body of criticism about R-G surpasses his *oeuvre* in both subtlety and precision.

Until Armes, the authoritative voice on R-G was that of Jean Ricardou, who shifted the focus of R-G criticism from the confines of the objective/subjective dichotomy and focused it directly on the text. What Armes does is to shift it yet again from a "mechanization" of the schematic texts R-G produces to a more appealing concept of the "musicalization" of the narrative. Armes's detailed textual analysis is enhanced with comments about the production work itself (which seems quite typical), giving a glimpse into the means of infusing spontaneity into the strict symmetry of a Robbe-Grillet script. Armes offers useful "tables" to display the balance of sequences in each film. Only one film escaped his critical devotion: *J a pris les dés,* a second film made from what was left on the cutting room floor after *L'Eden et après.* The film has been aired once on French television and, for no apparent reason, remains an ill-kept secret. Whoever is responsible owes Armes an apology for preventing an excellent reference work from being complete. *La Belle captive* is, of course, not included, because it was finished only in 1983, but it is to be hoped that Armes will apply the same method to that film and publish it in an appropriate journal.

Armes proves more critical than most auteurists, attributing for example, the increased erotic element after *L'Homme qui ment* to a desire to attract a wider audience. The playfulness of the films of the seventies is also attributed to R-G's increased confidence and therefore openness to actors' innovations, as happened in *L'Eden et après.*

The narrative remains the focus of critical debate: to tell or not to tell. Armes recaps the development of narrative cinema in order to illustrate that "the continued development of narrative is therefore arguably as crucial to the health of film as a signifying medium as to its role as a form of artistic expression, and the area in which Robbe-Grillet's work operates thus assumes an enormous importance." *La Belle captive,* however, makes the development of narrative appear to be suffering from recidivism: the labyrinthine experience turns out to be a dream; the hero awakens at the end, just as they did in the silents. Phylogeny recapitulates ontogeny?

The "enormous importance" of Robbe-Grillet's work would seem to remain the critical attention it has received. Serious scholars struggle with R-G, while he struggles against meaning: "Le grand ennemi pour moi, le seul ennemi peut-être, et sans doute depuis toujours, c'est . . . le sens." (p. 162) Armes believes that R-G's work can stand alone without the critical interpretive framework, al-

though the films demand a kind of viewing for which the mass audience is unprepared. For those who would prepare, Armes's book is a *sine qua non.* —KAREN JAEHNE

INGMAR BERGMAN: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY

By Peter Cowie. New York: Scribners, 1982.

It's a formidable task to write a biography of an autobiographical artist like Ingmar Bergman—one whose own personal account of events is already familiar and bound to be far more compelling than any second-hand version. The difficulty is compounded in the case of Bergman, who with an almost devilish cleverness has anticipated, parodied and hence defused the reactions of his critical commentators, whom he sees as destructive fools. He was specifically merciless with would-be biographers in *All These Women,* a satiric film in which a stupid, ambitious historian tries to blackmail his gifted artist/subject and usurp his sexual and artistic power. This film would make any Bergman biographer nervous.

Perhaps this context helps to explain why Peter Cowie's new book—the first Bergman biography to be published in English and certainly the most comprehensive critical commentary to date on his works both in cinema and in the theater—is so cautious, unassuming and almost dull. This blandness is particularly evident when the book is compared with *Bergman on Bergman,* the fascinating collection of interviews edited by Stig Bjorkman, Torsten Manns, and Jonas Sima in 1970, which was formerly the best biographical source in English and which still seems amazingly fresh. Though based on original interviews with Bergman's friends and collaborators and on material not previously available in English, Cowie's carefully researched study surprisingly yields few new insights. It frequently summarizes what was already known, correcting minor points of interpretation, elaborating on the primary facts in far greater detail, and amassing these voluminous data into a readable chronological narrative that is certainly essential reading for any student of Bergman. I will undoubtedly assign this book as a text the next time I teach a course on Bergman, yet I am disappointed that it neither forces nor inspires me to substantially alter my vision of the subject.

Aware of his own tendency to play it safe, Cowie defends this strategy in his preface with moral conviction.

> To write a biography of a living person arouses conflicting emotions. On the one hand, there is the sense of exasperation at being unable, by virtue either of fastidiousness or of a certain fear of the laws of libel, to pry too keenly into the intimate ways of the subject. . . .
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> From childhood on, Ingmar Bergman has been assailed by pressures and stimuli of uncommon strength; where these have affected his accomplishments as an artist, they have been described without inhibition. I leave the task of pursuing more dramatic or licentious revelations to my successors in the decades to come. (p. xi)

Apparently Cowie has taken his cue from *All These Women,* where "Cornelius [the biographer] is denied a glimpse of Felix's face, as is the audience. This is Bergman underlining the artist's claim to privacy." (p. 223)

Nevertheless, one motif that runs through Cowie's narrative is the creative interplay between Bergman's love life and artistic development, starting with Harriet Andersson, whom he calls "the first great female influence on Bergman's films." While acknowledging her independence, intelligence, and "fierce wriggling personality," Cowie claims her influence was rather limiting. "*Dreams* . . . coincided with the end of his relationship with Harriet Andersson. In the years ahead, Bergman would learn to transmute his reactionary pessimism into more stimulating and inspiring terms." According to Cowie, the romance with Bibi Andersson helped in the transmuting. "Bibi meant a great deal to Bergman in these years. Her youth and guileless ardor inspired some of his greatest creations. . . . Her presence coincided with—or perhaps prompted—Bergman's most idealistic period" (p. 134). Here Cowie flirts with the kind of approach that is frequently applied to Picasso, where each new spurt of creative growth is attributed to the Master's involvement with a new mistress. Skirting the controversial issue of whether Bergman's later work shows growth or decline, Cowie identifies three great peaks in Bergman's career, each based on an international critical success and each associated with a different Muse: "the late fifties, with *The*

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Seventh Seal and *Wild Strawberries* [inspired by Bibi Andersson]; the mid-sixties with *Persona* [starring Liv Ullman on and off screen]; and the mid-seventies, with *Scenes from a Marriage* and *The Magic Flute* [created within the marital harmony shared with Ingrid von Rosen, whom Cowie dubs Bergman's "woman for all seasons" (p. 166)]. Unfortunately, Cowie can find no fourth peak to assign to Käbi Lareti, whom he nevertheless credits with the development of a new Bergman style—"an approach at once austere and improvisatory" (p. 181). Cowie concludes that this marital interlude "had been a rich period in Bergman's middle age, and to Käbi he owed his fascination with ever more ascetic, ever more disciplined, and ever more 'musical' cinema" (p. 240).

The problem with this approach is that it really tells us nothing we don't already know—the fact of Bergman's involvement with these women, and the succession of his styles. The nature and degree of the connection between these facts remain vague speculation. Lest he be accused of attributing too much to the ladies, Cowie (despite his "fastidiousness") also alludes (in the most cautious language) to the possible creative influence of Bergman's "sexual ambivalence": "Bergman has the courage to confront and discuss his own deepest feelings of sexual ambivalence. Not for nothing does he admire Fassbinder for using the cinema to flirt with his own proclivities. In every artist there exists to some degree that exquisite sensitivity habitually associated with the homosexual temperament." (p. 334)

I devote so much attention to the sexual theme because it is one of the few that is sustained through the book. Cowie's chronological approach tends to highlight the particulars and turn his generalizations into asides. Most of his generalizations are either already well known or easily contradicted. For example, Cowie insists: "Throughout his career, Bergman has been much more at ease in the past than in the present" (p. 165). Surely this assumption is challenged by the examples of *Persona, Shame* and *Passion of Anna,* which Cowie acknowledges to be some of Bergman's finest works. While he gives exaggerated praise to the films from "the Golden Years" ("The wonder remains that the Bergman films made in the Malmö period possessed all the virtues and none of the impediments of a theatrical tradition," p. 11), he later acknowledges that in *The Seventh Seal* "the dialog may at times be theatrical" (p. 153) and that certain characters in *Wild Strawberries* "are contrived to the point of embarrassment" (p. 165).

As for Cowie's commentary on individual films, he is excellent in providing background information on the productions, but his criticism of the texts rarely goes beyond plot summaries or a synthesis of what has already been written. When he does come up with an especially perceptive insight, he leaves it undeveloped. When writing on films that have received little attention—e.g., the Faro documentaries or *The Lie,* he presents valuable observations, but, as with the other works, there is no sustained conception of the whole.

This same problem exists on the level of the chapters. The title of Ch. 14, "The Challenge of Television," promises to introduce an important new topic to Bergman criticism. Though he claims that this medium led Bergman to alter his style, this valuable line of inquiry is never really developed; Cowie merely pursues his regular detailed chronology of projects, three of which happen to have been made for the tube. Perhaps the best chapter is on the period of exile, for, in the process of defending Bergman against his accusers, Cowie presents a highly detailed account of the battle with the tax authorities that is both fascinating and persuasive, as is his argument that *The Serpent's Egg* was shaped and ruined by this traumatic experience.

To be fair, Cowie's chronological organization does enable him to show the rich interplay between Bergman's work in the theater and in the cinema. On this theme Cowie is at his best. For example, he demonstrates convincingly how Bergman's production of *The Misanthrope* contained the seeds of *The Magician,* how his staging of *The Sea Gull* helped to shape *Through a Glass Darkly,* and how the scenic design for *Hedda Gabler* colored *Cries and Whispers.* Yet these intriguing observations never form the basis of any controlling ideas.

In the final four pages of this 389-page study, Cowie makes a last-ditch effort to bring together all of his general observations about Bergman's creative approach. This strategy backfires, for it exposes the glaring weakness

of this otherwise admirable biography—a lack of ideas. —MARSHA KINDER

JAMES WHALE

By James Curtis. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1982. $16.50.

James Whale was probably the most important creative factor in the Universal horror movies of the early-to-mid-thirties. Despite their occasional shortcomings, his four contributions to the genre—*Frankenstein, The Old Dark House, The Invisible Man,* and *The Bride of Frankenstein*—hold up appreciably better than the other Universal horrors of that era. The dourness of, for instance, *The Mummy, The Black Cat,* and *The Invisible Ray* makes them more valuable as museum pieces than as films—and *The Raven* is, of course, invaluable as camp. But Whale and his writers approached horror more indirectly, less soberly, with the result that we can now take *his* films more seriously than those. They disarm one with their wit (a quality in short supply in genre films of any era) without sacrificing dramatic texture and nuance.

Bride of Frankenstein, for example, is a very odd, amusing horror-fantasy-comedy, occasionally criticized expressly *for* being so amusing, for not being serious enough. The character of Dr. Pretorius (Ernest Thesiger), a gaunt, fey old gent who sees science as, primarily, a grand lark, perhaps throws some viewers off. He's Dr. Frankenstein-*plus*. He is as obsessed with creating life as is Henry (Colin Clive) but lacks Henry's scruples. He is decidedly irresponsible. (In fact he explicitly *refuses* to be held responsible for his actions.) And the film he adorns may, mistakenly, be seen to reflect his irresponsibility. Pretorius is not, however, supposed to be a role model. Nor is he a stock villain, a stock comic, or even a didactic figure. But his irrepressibility is set against the harrowing adventures of the monster (Boris Karloff), who finds Pretorius's grand design for a race of man-made men flawed—in execution if not conception. It all depends on the point-of-view, and only Henry can see, at times, both Pretorius's *and* the monster's. Both the latter characters are, admittedly, compelling, but the monster (reluctant annihilation) wins out over Pretorius (frivolous creation).

Whale's film career after *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), as documented in Curtis's book, is a story of butchered and/or neglected films like *Remember Last Night?, The Road Back,* and *The Great Garrick,* hack work, and industry disinterest. He was, more or less, retired from stage and screen directing from 1941 until his death in 1957. There are occasional gaps in the narrative of his life here (e.g., a quick-cut from the Whale eager to return to London from New York, in 1929, to the Whale travelling by train directly from New York to Hollywood), but *James Whale* reads pretty smoothly as biography. (A little less so as criticism.) Even the history of the making of *Frankenstein* seems fresh and readable, which is a bit surprising considering how often that history has been recounted in film books and magazines.

Whale himself seems, in Curtis's portrait, as hard to pin down as *Bride of Frankenstein:* flippant, serious; mocking, earnest; ambitious, modest. He had an affinity for certain actors (Thesiger, Clive); a coolness towards others (Lew Ayres, Louis Hayward)—a partiality which perhaps helps to account for the unevenness of his films. He seemed to get all or nothing from his players, as he encouraged some and ignored others. *Bride* appears, in retrospect, very much a personal film for him, whether or not he acknowledged it as such. One can picture the director identifying with both Pretorius *and* the monster; empathizing with their complementary senses of God-like power and man-like powerlessness. Whale left a suicide note in which he spoke of a feeling of "no peace . . . just . . . pain." *Bride of Frankenstein* might be his testament on film.

—DON WILLIS

. . . BUT WE NEED THE EGGS
The Magic of Woody Allen

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Diane Jacobs's thesis is that there are three Woody Allens: "Woody," the Woody Allen persona, "the slight, Jewish, schnooky but smart New Yorker"; "Allen," the creator "who breathes life into Woody and then proceeds to manipulate him"; and "Mr. Allen," the celebrity, the talk-show guest, clarinet player, Rolls Royce owner. But almost always,

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By James Curtis. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1982. $16.50.

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Bride of Frankenstein, for example, is a very odd, amusing horror-fantasy-comedy, occasionally criticized expressly *for* being so amusing, for not being serious enough. The character of Dr. Pretorius (Ernest Thesiger), a gaunt, fey old gent who sees science as, primarily, a grand lark, perhaps throws some viewers off. He's Dr. Frankenstein-*plus*. He is as obsessed with creating life as is Henry (Colin Clive) but lacks Henry's scruples. He is decidedly irresponsible. (In fact he explicitly *refuses* to be held responsible for his actions.) And the film he adorns may, mistakenly, be seen to reflect his irresponsibility. Pretorius is not, however, supposed to be a role model. Nor is he a stock villain, a stock comic, or even a didactic figure. But his irrepressibility is set against the harrowing adventures of the monster (Boris Karloff), who finds Pretorius's grand design for a race of man-made men flawed—in execution if not conception. It all depends on the point-of-view, and only Henry can see, at times, both Pretorius's *and* the monster's. Both the latter characters are, admittedly, compelling, but the monster (reluctant annihilation) wins out over Pretorius (frivolous creation).

Whale's film career after *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), as documented in Curtis's book, is a story of butchered and/or neglected films like *Remember Last Night?, The Road Back,* and *The Great Garrick,* hack work, and industry disinterest. He was, more or less, retired from stage and screen directing from 1941 until his death in 1957. There are occasional gaps in the narrative of his life here (e.g., a quick-cut from the Whale eager to return to London from New York, in 1929, to the Whale travelling by train directly from New York to Hollywood), but *James Whale* reads pretty smoothly as biography. (A little less so as criticism.) Even the history of the making of *Frankenstein* seems fresh and readable, which is a bit surprising considering how often that history has been recounted in film books and magazines.

Whale himself seems, in Curtis's portrait, as hard to pin down as *Bride of Frankenstein:* flippant, serious; mocking, earnest; ambitious, modest. He had an affinity for certain actors (Thesiger, Clive); a coolness towards others (Lew Ayres, Louis Hayward)—a partiality which perhaps helps to account for the unevenness of his films. He seemed to get all or nothing from his players, as he encouraged some and ignored others. *Bride* appears, in retrospect, very much a personal film for him, whether or not he acknowledged it as such. One can picture the director identifying with both Pretorius *and* the monster; empathizing with their complementary senses of God-like power and man-like powerlessness. Whale left a suicide note in which he spoke of a feeling of "no peace . . . just . . . pain." *Bride of Frankenstein* might be his testament on film.

—DON WILLIS

. . . BUT WE NEED THE EGGS
The Magic of Woody Allen

By Diane Jacobs. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982. $11.95.

Diane Jacobs's thesis is that there are three Woody Allens: "Woody," the Woody Allen persona, "the slight, Jewish, schnooky but smart New Yorker"; "Allen," the creator "who breathes life into Woody and then proceeds to manipulate him"; and "Mr. Allen," the celebrity, the talk-show guest, clarinet player, Rolls Royce owner. But almost always,

says Jacobs, from his early *shticks* as a nightclub comic to his 1981 play *The Floating Lightbulb* and his most recent movies (the book stops short of *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy*), Woody Allen's primary subject is himself—"as artist, as character, as celebrity."

His obsessions throughout his career have remained focused on "the incongruity of things" and on the conflict between reality and what Jacobs calls "magic." By magic she means literal magic, such as the tricks which Paul, Allen's protagonist in *The Floating Lightbulb* performs, as well as daydreams, art, and romantic love. Through a careful examination of his work, including nightclub routines, stories and sketches for magazines such as *The New Yorker,* and plays and movies, Jacobs traces the development of these three Woody Allen personas and the development of Allen's themes.

While her writing is by and large insightful, Jacobs (the author of *Hollywood Renaissance,* film critic for *Horizon,* and a contributor to the *New York Times, Village Voice,* and other periodicals) occasionally falls into the trap of belaboring the obvious: *of course* Allen's self-parodies are also comments on the modern world. An added annoyance is that Jacobs seems obsessed with establishing her credentials as a film and literary *cognoscenta.* Her comparison of the Woody Allen persona with that of Charlie Chaplin is revealing; her allusions to Bob Hope, Jack Benny, the Marx Brothers, and Preston Sturges are provocative; but when she hauls in Shakespeare, Chekhov, Fellini, Robert Frost, Thornton Wilder, Tennessee Williams, Kaufman and Hart, Lubitsch, Cukor, Schnitzler, and a pantheon of others, one is tempted to cry "Enough." Or, "Enough, already."

The jacket copy for . . . *But We Need the Eggs* states that an "extensive (and rarely granted) interview with Allen supplements Jacobs' own insights." If so, Allen either failed to reveal much about himself in the interview, or else Jacobs failed to use much of what he said. The book, while strong on intellectual (primarily literary) analysis, is weak on personal insights into its subject. Biographical information is limited to about two pages; and while gossip is not a necessary or even desirable ingredient of scholarship, a little more light shed on Jacobs's "Mr. Allen," the celebrity, would not be amiss.

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EISENSTEIN AT WORK

By Jay Leyda and Zina Voynow. New York: Pantheon, 1983. $30.00 cloth, $15.95 paper.

This beautifully produced book (with a long, thoughtful introduction by Ted Perry) is a sort of annotated scrapbook. It begins with a chronology of Eisenstein's life and work (in the theater, up to 1924 and *Strike;* a more standard chronology ends the book). Then comes an article, "The Montage of Film Attractions," which Eisenstein probably wrote at the time of *Strike*'s release; it speaks of "the provocation of associations," of telling *trouvailles* in Chaplin and Griffith; it includes the shot list for the massacre in *Strike* and discusses scenario and acting problems. Although Leyda and Voynow avoid the claim, it would seem to be Eisenstein's first known writing on film, and it is an astonishingly prescient document. The remainder of the book traces Eisenstein's career, from the *Year 1905* project through the great films to the sad time after *Ivan the Terrible,* with a wealth of unknown photographs, diary notes by Eisenstein and others, and modest connective text by the authors. Reproductions of Eisenstein script notes and shot drawings are given in profusion, with translations where needed—including much on the murder sequence in *An American Tragedy* and on the unmade Russian projects. For anyone interested in how the mind of a master director works, this is a primary and fascinating set of materials.

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CLAUDE LELOUCH, FILM DIRECTOR

By Peter Lev. East Brunswick, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983. $24.50.

The tone of Peter Lev's book on Claude Lelouch, the first study of such length in English, is ambivalent. Lelouch "arrived" on the international film scene in 1966 with the great success—popular, financial, and to a degree, critical—of *A Man and a Woman,* which won the Golden Palm at Cannes and the American Academy Award for Best For-

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Lelouch has said that "what interests me is to make a film that is of great quality and popular at the same time," and herein of course lies a dilemma all too familiar to artists. The director is not afraid to risk experiments from time to time, but Lev's ultimate judgment, expressed in the book's introduction, is that Lelouch "is certainly an ambitious film-maker, but he rarely, if ever, realizes his ambitions." Coming upon a statement of this sort so early in a book does not exactly excite the reader to move on to what is to follow. Even Lelouch's popular success is open to question. At the end of his appraisal of *A Man and a Woman,* Lev hedges: "The mass public demonstrated *fairly* good taste in responding to a film that is both stylistically original and emotionally engaging" (my italics). Lelouch's "epic," *And Now My Love* (1974), is treated in a chapter entitled "Un Chef d'Oeuvre Manqué." In sum, Lelouch is presented by Lev as a director who possesses a good deal of energy, a talent for making gorgeous movies, a flair for accessible plotting which the public will like, a man who wants to be something more than a box-office success, but whose main claim to prominence is style. Lev points out that Lelouch has difficulty in giving his plots depth and coherence. Neither ideas nor ideology interest Lelouch very much at all; indeed, he now regrets having participated in the 1976 collective effort of several directors, *Far From Vietnam.* He is, says Lev, hampered by a tendency to moralize and a fundamental optimism which encourages him to wind up his films with rather flimsy and simplistic endings—"he proposes that one can live well in this world without changing it . . . The light tone of his films, so attractive in itself, often glosses over important issues."

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INGMAR BERGMAN AND THE RITUALS OF ART

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This is not a comprehensive study of Bergman, nor an imposition of a critical system on his works, nor a search into his philosophical and literary sources. Such books, Livingston claims at the outset, already exist, and he has no desire to rewrite them. Instead, he chooses to concentrate on the fundamental concepts that steer Bergman's imagination.

Although the author refers to numerous films to bolster and enlarge his contentions, the burden of the case—or cases, since no single thesis governs the book—is borne by detailed examinations of nine films, distributed among six chapters. An observation of similarities in the clown figures in *Sawdust and Tinsel* and *The Seventh Seal* launches the inquiry by indicating Bergman's fascination with "the patterns of violence, victimage, and humiliation." Viewing these same patterns from a different (and much narrower) angle,

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the following chapter deals entirely with *The Magician* through consideration of the final shot; in this close-up of a swinging lantern, Livingston discerns the film's key image, representing Bergman's characteristic oscillation between the values of the bourgeoisie and the artist. *Smiles of a Summer Night* serves as the next principal text in a discussion of the "Comic Device," although the central concern is not the film itself but the comparison of Bergson's theory of comedy with Bergman's practice. Despite the obvious differences among both the films themselves and the aims of the sections in which they appear, a consistent motif weaves through the book's first three chapters; briefly stated, it is that art functions ritualistically in containing and controlling destructive forces. Although Livingston does not call attention to the shift, the second half of his book, in concentrating on the post-trilogy films, stresses the breakdown in this function. *The Ritual* lends its title to a discussion of the crisis, evident throughout Bergman's films since the mid-'sixties, resulting from the tensions between his belief that the rituals of art have become a sloughed-off remnant of the past and his urgent personal need for artistic creation. Then, using the ideas of Theodor Adorno as the pivot for an inspection of *Persona* and *The Shame* as complementary films, the author moves from the artist's inner crisis to an aesthetic of fragmentation dictated by the accelerating disintegration of the world's social order. This enfeeblement of art's rituals by the explosion of the possibility of meaning also underlies the concluding chapter, where *Hour of the Wolf* and *The Magic Flute* are juxtaposed as the major contrasting documents.

Livington's approach may try the patience of some readers: in eschewing the development of a sharply defined thesis, he often allows himself too much latitude in exfoliating arguments not immediate to his subject. Also, a few errors creep into the text and, more often, details offered in evidence are either suppositious or misconstrued. But these distractions should not cause one to lose sight of the book's several conspicuous merits. Even though Livingston's purpose is not to explicate individual films, the interpretations on which he builds his broader analysis are essentially sound; and while they are not profoundly new, his presentation escapes from the parochialism of much film criticism by treating Bergman's constructs within a larger intellectual context. Most important, he observes revealing recurrent patterns, and the issues that command his attention are crucial to understanding Bergman.

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HOWARD HAWKS, STORYTELLER

By Gerald Mast. Oxford University Press, 1982. $29.95.

Perhaps the hardest thing to talk about is the self-evident. A complex intellectual problem can find its proper tangle of words; the phrasing of the problem usually prompts the phrasing of a solution. An essential task in writing about cinema is to find words for what is phrased nonverbally, in the utterly different structure of light. Howard Hawks's comments on his own work depended on words like "good," as in "some good scenes," and "fun," as in "we had fun making that picture." This doesn't mean that Hawks didn't understand his own work; his regular remark that he couldn't figure out where the French critics "got their ideas" about his work, however, does imply that he felt their discourse inappropriate to what he had accomplished. What Gerald Mast has done in his newest book is to talk about Hawks in a way that the director might well have endorsed, not only by writing in a clean and familiar style whose grace and efficiency complement the subject, but also by talking about the right things.

The value of the best previous book on Hawks, Robin Wood's 1968 one-man study (which Hawks identified in 1976 as his favorite), is that it placed Hawks in the Conrad tradition and explored the ways Hawks's values were expressed in his work; it found theme-clusters that proved viable. The only other previous Hawks book that could be called essential is Joseph McBride's *Hawks on Hawks,* a loving work in which the critic's understanding of his subject prompted him to arrange interview fragments in a way that revealed the inner logic of Hawks's self-understanding. In this genuinely important book, Mast has found an appropriate way to polish both sides of that two-headed coin, to show clearly how

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the value structures and the sense of fun are inextricable, how they find their fusion in the rigors of his casting (the "star-character" dancer/dance) and the efficiency of his narrative systems—in the kind of stories he liked to tell, and the way he liked to tell them.

On the one occasion when I met him, Hawks returned often to the charge of repetition. It bothered him a great deal that he felt people disliked or couldn't understand his reasons for repeating a scene (like the embattled jail or cottage in *Rio Bravo, The Big Sleep, Rio Lobo,* etc., which seems to appear in his work almost as regularly as a nativity scene decorates a downtown), an effect (bulletholes tearing across a door), a line ("That's how close you came"), or a certain kind of woman ("But that's the kind of woman I like," he said; "if you were making a picture, wouldn't you put in the kind of woman you liked?"). I think he would have been pleased with the way Mast, in his analysis of *Red River,* shows how most of the important elements appear twice within that film, how the repetition and variation point to a clear moral that is also the story, and how all these doubles are summed up in the emblem of the snake bracelet which is itself a sign of the love and complementarity between Dunson and Matthew, which is also the continuity of history and the recurring relevance of myth (cf. Eliade's *Myth of the Eternal Return,* which Mast doesn't mention but which can be useful in understanding Hawks's mythic impulse and the relation of *Red River* to *The Road to Glory*). In the book's most brilliant moment, Mast analyzes the amazing pan just before the cattle drive begins, showing how the shot's opening with Matt's view of Dunson and closing with Dunson's view of Matt—while maintaining the overarching point of view of "the storyteller," who is more or less identified with Hawks though in *Red River* the ostensible narrator is Groot—links the two figures on an extraordinarily deep level; then he goes on to show that the form of the pan and the nodes of its attention (Matthew and Dunson), when drawn on paper, can clearly be recognized as the form of the snake bracelet, which as a prop is the link between the story's two generations and a symbol of the process and problem *of* generation, the route of recurrence, the unexpected mirror, the straight line that inevitably returns to its point of origin. Without my fancy words, this is all clear in the irreducibly simple pan. It is not necessary for Mast to write like a frustrated poet or anal-compulsive semiotician in order to explicate this shot; his clarity is necessary to do justice to the simplicity of the effect. And simplicity can be as profound and unanalyzable as water —and as necessary, as this sort of clarity is necessary for good criticism.

The key to Mast's approach is his emphasis on Hawks as storyteller. In the opening chapters he sets up the terms: what makes a good story, what is an *auteur,* what do stories have to do with movies, how do stories express values. He identifies a recurring structure in the stories (which he uses in his own book, I think):

> . . . Howard Hawks builds every story in an identical four-part structure. The first part is a prologue that either (1) establishes the conflict in a past or present close relationship of the major characters . . . or (2) initiates a conflict by the collision of two apparently opposite characters upon their initial meeting . . . The second and third parts develop the central conflict established in the first, either by letting one of the conflicting characters or life styles dominate in the second part, then the other in the third, or by letting one of the characters work alone in the second part, then both of them together in the third. And the fourth section resolves the central conflict, often by a return to the original physical setting of the prologue but in which setting the warring characters now see themselves and one another in a new light.

He finds that the process of the narrative depends on the characters' discovering something about themselves that may have been self-evident all along, and he shows how that discovery clarifies the values implicit in the story. He takes a solid swipe at *auteur* critics who value a director like Sirk for his tics and tidbits of often embattled commentary, finding considerably more value in Hawks's authoritative control of the entire narrative system. And he continually emphasizes the central critical problem: that in Hawks's work there only appears to be nothing to talk about, because the seamless grace and understated rigor of his art only appear to be artless. At one point he draws in Jane Austen and Shakespeare to demonstrate the art of the apparently artless, a critical ploy that may have been necessary to lure the hypercritics around

his campfire before going on to spin his own "story"; in fact one of the best things about this book is the way it draws in several kinds of audience, from the Hawks expert to the person reading his first serious film book. What Mast offers everyone in this audience is a guided tour of Hawks's use of composition, lighting, and camera placement/movement, demonstrating in a series of excellent analyses how the art is at work and how its refusal to be foregrounded is itself a key to the values, and the attitude toward values, that it expresses. He also analyzes and clarifies the narrative logic and structures of what he considers Hawks's nine best films, and what emerges from all this is a profound, consistent, and very well-understood view of the world and our role in it. The essence of that view may prove familiar to people who already take Hawks seriously; what is most new is the way Mast has found to talk about it, a way that reflects a good deal of training in literary criticism but that is also perfectly meshed with the essentially nonverbal methods of cinema. Without being in the least coy about this, I think that all his years of writing and rewriting his *Short History of the Movies* (whose particular strength is its ability to introduce the reader to film history *via* a series of relatively simple expositions in a clearly developing context) have really paid off here; it is in this book that he hits both his subject and his stride.

The major portion of the text is devoted to a close reading of the nine films, eight of which are intriguingly paired by subject and narrative strategy. From the Table of Contents:

- Dangerous Professions: *Scarface* and *Only Angels Have Wings.*
- Comedies of Youth and Age: *Bringing Up Baby* and *Monkey Business.*
- Two Hecht-MacArthur Plays into Howard Hawks Films: *Twentieth Century* and *His Girl Friday.*
- Hemingway and Chandler into Bogart-Bacall and Hawks: *To Have and Have Not* and *The Big Sleep.*
- The Genre Epic: *Red River.*

These pairings are often more striking than the chapter titles might suggest. He finds *Scarface* and *Only Angels Have Wings* to be linked in a dialectic of tones, for instance, and finds many parallels in their uses of camera movement and light source; he shows how nicknames function as social commentary, how certain kinds of death can direct audience sympathy, and how the professions of "gangstering and flying" can be seen to be related not only to each other but also to the collaborative activity of film-making. In spite of the good reasons for pairing *Bringing Up Baby* with *Monkey Business* and *Twentieth Century* with *His Girl Friday,* he acknowledges and explores the relations between *Bringing Up Baby* and *His Girl Friday,* or *His Girl Friday* and *Twentieth Century;* it takes a secure critic with a good argument to juggle oppositions in this manner, and it contributes without confusion to the complex portrait of Hawks. At the end, he returns to his own point of origin and demonstrates how what has been discovered has been evident all along, so that his book and the process through which it has led the reader function as a demonstration of the essential Hawks pattern as well as evidence of the critic's own trust in Hawks's manner of exposition and interrelation.

As a longtime student of Hawks, I have hundreds of notes, minor corrections, and favorite passages to take up here, but this issue is crammed with reviews and space is at a premium. It seems to me that Mast does not have the last word on *The Big Sleep,* although everything he says about that picture makes sense. There is no way that *The Wild Palms* (1939) could have influenced Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not* (1937). Though I find the argument that the title of *Red River* is a reference to the Red Sea intriguing and possible, Mast does get wrong the reasons Moses was denied entrance to the Promised Land (see Numbers 20:7–13 and Deuteronomy 32: 51–52), and I am much more convinced of the parallels with *Mutiny on the Bounty.* Groot's narrating *Red River* is not as much of a problem as Mast thinks it is (it's a simple instance of mindscreen), and more could have been made of Groot's saying that he is telling the story "of the Red River D," which he does and whose centrality the title points to (and that brand is of course the emblem of the Matthew/Dunson relationship and everything that means). I very much enjoyed the way Mast had the guts to attack *Rio Bravo, Red Line 7000,* and other cult favorites. Although I can see his point in relating Ford to Faulkner and Hawks to Hemingway, I think that on

two other levels he misses the converse: that it was Hawks who worked with Faulkner and Ford who rejected Faulkner's scripts for *Submarine Patrol, Drums Along the Mohawk,* etc., and that in works like *The Road to Glory* or even such non-Faulkner works as *Only Angels Have Wings* there is a distinct complementarity to metaphysical and value structures that points to a solid link between Hawks and Faulkner. The filmography appears complete and is certainly the best one in print (far better than that in *Hawks on Hawks*); the research is impeccable, and the Hawks papers at Brigham Young have been used with great care and insight. He wipes out the myth of the "eye-level camera." He seems to miss an important point about *Bringing Up Baby* and with it the reason for the second leopard and the recurring imagery of cages and jails: that sex can be wild and destructive too, and that the course of the lovers' emotional education has to find a middle ground between impotence and anarchy, not just to move out of the laboratory into the countryside. Baby, the tamable leopard, is in that dialectic between dullness (death) and danger (death) which is fun (life), and that too is a good emblem for Hawks's films; much of the fun is that the "animal" *might not* be tame, and what is underneath that is an anxiety (that Mast does not mention), a feeling that cages might on some level be necessary, that accounts for the pull toward self-control if not repression, and that prompts the equal and opposite reaction toward playfulness and irresponsibility. He never takes up the theme of blindness in Hawks's work, though he is very good on the theme of death. He is marvelous on evolution and reverse evolution in *Monkey Business.* Only in his discussion of *Red River* does he discuss the tone I find basic to Hawks, a tone of gentle masculine love (which can be heard in Wayne's tone in "Take 'em to Missouri, Matt" or "You've earned it"), an emotional vulnerability that belies the apparently macho values of many of his pictures. Although he does not really engage the notion of sentimentality and the unsentimental quality of moral judgment in Hawks's work (another key tone), his analysis of the sugar theft in *Red River* and his excellent discovery of a parallel to that event in the climactic fistfight gets around to the same insight. His work on the two extant versions of *Red River* is excellent. His discussion of *Monkey Business* offers a useful corrective to Cavell's work on the "genre" of remarriage. He is positively brilliant on the ways Hawks's happy endings are tied up with images of "complete vocational fulfillment," because that involves true humanity and emotional maturity. The discussions that stand out as best, I think, are those of *Twentieth Century, His Girl Friday,* and *Red River.* The only film Mast should have added to his central section is *The Road to Glory* (second version), which offers the best parallel to *Red River* and the most complex exploration of existentialism/love/recurrence/myth/history/job. His remarks on the relations between moral and personal obligation and spiritual unity are, simply, true; what for Ford is often expressed as a conflict between love and duty is resolved in Hawks's insight that, as Mast puts it, "love *is* the duty."

Each of these points proliferates, and any student of Hawks is sure to have his or her own long list of flaws and favorites. Like any really authoritative book, *Howard Hawks, Storyteller* starts conversations rather than closes them. The best thing about it is that it has found a way to analyze the classical narrative style without violating the patience of the reader or the integrity of the subject. Mast has found a way to explicate what Hawks took for granted, and that is, finally, the best thing about this book and the films.

—BRUCE KAWIN

KUBRICK: INSIDE A FILM ARTIST'S MAZE

By Thomas Allen Nelson. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. $37.50 cloth, $9.95 paper.

The enigmatic cinema of Kubrick is made a little more tangible in Nelson's demanding and thorough study. While he rejects neat pigeonholing, Nelson posits a loose theoretical framework to tie Kubrick's films together. He describes Kubrick's *oeuvre* as the cinema of "contingency": the alternation of the external properties of reality with the intricate mechanisms of the human mind through a symmetrical geometric design. This is a thematic/emotive cohesion which disrupts our everyday view of normality, with the emphasis

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Nelson offers an informative introductory chapter which roughly defines Kubrick's strategy. Fascinated by the tension between realism and expressionism as well as the dehumanization process, Kubrick dramatizes ways in which meaning loses its authority in a world of spatial and temporal dislocation.

Nelson does not imply that Kubrick seeks a progressive strategy; he would never limit himself to a linear expression. Rather, Kubrick expands his beliefs about the paradoxes of human relations with each film, utilizing a wide variety of challenging sources suitable for cinematic adaptation. Somehow Kubrick still remains slightly elusive, if not so enigmatic. Nonetheless, this study constitutes a noteworthy scholarly achievement.

—BILL DESOWITZ

GEORGE CUKOR

By Gene D. Phillips. Boston: Twayne, 1982

George Cukor continues to defeat critics' efforts to get a clear fix on his impressive body of work, which spans a neat 50 years from *Tarnished Lady* in 1931 to *Rich and Famous* in 1981. Confronting the variety and visual subtlety of his vast output, critics have shown a tendency to fall into glittering generalities, praising Cukor's "taste," his "elegance," his "discretion," or have gone round and round in a theoretical thicket trying to decide if Cukor's many stage adaptations are sufficiently "cinematic" or hopelessly "theatrical."

Phillips sets large goals for his new study of Cukor's films—to elucidate the Cukorian style, to demonstrate how Cukor transformed works of theater and fiction into satisfying, eminently "cinematic" films—but he's no more successful in meeting them than those who have gone before. Phillips takes refuge in generalities—"spare, immaculate direction," "skillfully composed shots," Cukor's "compassion"—and declares victory on the larger issues, possibly hoping readers haven't noticed that he hasn't quite made his case.

Phillips, however, does correctly focus on what may be the single most important feature of Cukor's style: the long take with its accompanying emphasis on camera movement and movement within the shot (Phillips calls the latter "cutting within the camera"). He identifies Cukor's preference for this manner of shooting in a film as early as *Rockabye* (1932), and he makes the provocative point that the long takes in Cukor's generally neglected 1949 film, *Edward, My Son,* are at least as masterful as Hitchcock's ten-minute takes in the much more acclaimed *Rope* a year earlier.

Phillips's iconoclastic view of *Edward, My Son* points up the leading strength of his book: a commendable amount of attention and space is devoted to films that are usually ignored but that might just be ripe for re-evaluation. Along with *Edward, My Son,* these include *A Woman's Face* (1940), *The Actress* (1953), *Heller in Pink Tights* (1960), and *Justine* (1969). Phillips, in fact, does better with the obscure films than he does with the more famous ones. His analysis of *The Philadelphia Story,* for example, is almost inexcusably banal, and he devotes an inexplicable amount of space to the overrated and uncharacteristically pretentious *A Double Life.* Back on the plus side, his analysis of Cukor's coming to terms with CinemaScope for *A Star Is Born* is the best I've read.

The plus side of the book also includes Phillips's recounting of Cukor's beginnings in motion pictures, an orderly, earnest apprenticeship that seems almost quaint in contrast to how these things are handled in the New Hollywood. The book also contains a complete, easy-to-read filmography and a seemingly thorough bibliography.

The Phillips book, then, is, not surprisingly, a mixed bag: weak on analysis, strong on nuts-and-bolts information, pleasingly eccentric in its interest in overlooked films. Phillips has made a respectable attempt at meeting the Cukor challenge, but it can still be said that Cukor, whose death earlier this year may inspire new efforts from the braver souls

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ANTONIONI'S VISUAL LANGUAGE

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Rifkin took his doctorate in art history, and his training would seem apt for studying Antonioni, the most visually sophisticated and even painterly of directors. But the book is a disappointment. The title itself bears no relation to the kind of discussion that we associate with Christian Metz—serious inquiry into the semiotic status of visual imagery and the techniques for representing it on the screen. Pronouncements like the following are about all that is forthcoming: "Style is an active element of any language system. The term 'visual language' connotes a matrix of optical data which, when decoded, can be translated into meaning or a system of content. Similarly, a specific style of visual language is essentially no different than a particular style of written or spoken languages." (p. 15) That blurs several decades of work clarifying the relation of cinematic communication to other kinds. And despite the references to "code," "system," and the like, the terms are used loosely and metaphorically. One feels an urge to protest, but there is little of theoretical substance to protest *against*.

Rifkin's chapters offer a mixed bag of features, indiscriminately contentual and formal: they concern "Place" (locations, both architectural and natural), "Placement" (composition), "Movement" (mostly of the camera), "Color," and a final chapter, called "Mastery," on *The Passenger*.

What does the book in is its failure to establish any real thesis about these topics. Rifkin's typical method is to cite a feature, say the use of the high-angle camera, and then to simply go through Antonioni's films chronologically to illustrate it. To make matters worse, this is done in a mechanical way. Each section tends to begin "In *L'eclisse* . . ." (or whatever the film). Rarely is it possible to carry away a *point* about the high-angle camera and not just a catalogue of its occurrences. These occurrences are themselves so embedded in a renarration of the events that evoke them that the text reads mostly like a detailed and repetitive plot summary. And as if he feared that the reader did not have enough in the way of summary in the text proper, Rifkin provides formal plot-summaries in 13 appendices. He seems to have had some difficulty envisaging his audience: one would imagine that readers of this series would already know enough about the films of Antonioni to plunge directly into the exciting details of his technique. Instead, the evidence (that here *are* places, and placements, and movements) is provided systematically and dutifully, as in a dissertation. And, as in a dissertation, one senses the ongoing need to haul up authorities to prove that the author is right. Here again the prevalence of citations seems more important than their relevance. Antonioni, the leading authority, is cited repeatedly; unfortunately, he has said many things about his work, some of them contradictory. It is hard to build a tight argument about his *oeuvre* if you also feel the need to furnish your account with a mosaic of quotations.

Rifkin's approach is completely uncritical: the implication seems to be that all the films, even *I vinti, La signora senza camelie* and *Le amiche,* are complete successes, and that Antonioni's achievement stretches in a long smooth ascent to the "mastery" of *The Passenger*. The thesis, I think, cannot be sustained. *I vinti* is dreadful by any standards, but especially as measured against the promise of Antonioni's first feature, *Cronaca di un amore.* And many critics would argue that *The Passenger,* though a good film, is not up to *L'avventura* or *L'eclisse.*

Finally, Rifkin's assertion of the importance of metaphor and symbol in Antonioni I find quite misguided. He says, for instance, "The notion that dominant dramatic information can be delivered to the viewer through a visual mode of sign and symbol is the essence of Antonioni's visual language" (p. 14: the prose never gets much better than this). On the contrary, I believe that a close reading of Antonioni's films, early and late, shows a considerable effort to avoid the symbolic (especially the easily symbolic) in favor of a rendition of the world as it really is, sometimes even to the bafflement of film-maker and viewer alike. Rifkin writes: ". . . the boatmen and the garbagemen [in *Gente del Po* and

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Finally, Rifkin's assertion of the importance of metaphor and symbol in Antonioni I find quite misguided. He says, for instance, "The notion that dominant dramatic information can be delivered to the viewer through a visual mode of sign and symbol is the essence of Antonioni's visual language" (p. 14: the prose never gets much better than this). On the contrary, I believe that a close reading of Antonioni's films, early and late, shows a considerable effort to avoid the symbolic (especially the easily symbolic) in favor of a rendition of the world as it really is, sometimes even to the bafflement of film-maker and viewer alike. Rifkin writes: ". . . the boatmen and the garbagemen [in *Gente del Po* and

N.U.] of his first two shorts were not players but simply 'were,' in the neo-realist tradition as Bazin cited it. Their very existence evoked symbolic meaning when enlarged and isolated on the screen." (17) Obviously a non-sequitur: and only the first sentence is true. Nor can I see any reason for calling *Zabriskie Point* an "allegory of life against death" (death, I suppose, being represented by the Establishment and life by Mark and Daria). I agree with Rifkin that the characters in this flawed film are among the "least credible" in Antonioni's career, but, alas, for reasons that have nothing to do with allegory. Nor is there "water symbolism" in *Le amiche.* Nor does Patrizia's whippet, in *L'avventura,* ironically symbolize her marital infidelity. And so on. To ferret out symbols is to banalize Antonioni's films and thus to wreck them.

—SEYMOUR CHATMAN

PECKINPAH: A PORTRAIT IN MONTAGE

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ROBERT BRESSON: A GUIDE TO REFERENCES AND RESOURCES. By Jane Sloan. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1983. $35.00.

These three books continue the by-now hallowed G. K. Hall tradition of appearing singularly ugly to the eye in typeface and layout, and only slightly invigorating to the mind, while remaining extremely useful as reference tools, and too expensive for anything/anyone but well-endowed libraries or sultans to purchase. All three, in short, are indispensable but inadequate entries in an uneven series.

Eugene P. Walz's support of Truffaut in his critical survey, for instance, is so unconditional and uninflected—making every Truffaut film seem equally important—that he can easily conclude, "Truffaut's first three feature films constitute probably the most auspicious debut of any narrative director." After awhile, this leads to a certain flattening effect that turns the director into something like oatmeal—consistent, packed with vitamins, and dependably conventional. In the sheer density of information on display here, however, what Wolz has gathered together is awesome, and despite some irritations—like typos in the index, and irrelevancies in the bibliography (e.g., a report by Arthur Knight on *l'affaire Langlois* with "no mention of Truffaut's role"!)—he has compiled and given orderly arrangement to an endless forest of materials.

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In keeping with her subject, Jane Sloan is perhaps the most careful and meticulous of all the researchers here, in her volume on Robert Bresson. Sometimes what she has to work with is meagre—Bresson's first film, the comedy *Les Affaires publiques* (1934), is lost today—but even here, she has translated a large portion of an Italian text describing the film. Among the more interesting discoveries for me in the critical survey is the convincing demonstration of Dulac's *La Souriante Madame Beudet* as one of Bresson's conscious reference points in *Une Femme douce;* among the more disappointing omissions is the insufficiently acknowledged impact of Jean-Pierre Melville's *Poème de la mer* on *Le Journal d'un curé de campagne.*

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THE SILENT SCREAM
Alfred Hitchcock's Sound Track

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The study of film sound has been coming into its own in the last five years, but this is to my knowledge the first published *auteur* (director) book that concentrates on the sound track. The publisher is to be commended for venturing forth with such a novel topic. Weis devotes chapter-length studies to six films (*Blackmail, Murder, Secret Agent,* the first *Men Who Knew Too Much, Rear Window,* and *The Birds*) and treats several others in two topic chapters—one on diegetic music and its narrative functions, and one on "aural intrusion" as formal and thematic device. I found the topic chapters to be generally more dense and interesting. While sometimes the film analyses make telling points—mainly about formal matters—sometimes they become mere exercises in list-making.

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Kagan, Norman. *American Skeptic: Robert Altman's Genre-Commentary Films.* Ann Arbor: Pierian Press, 1982. $17.95. Kagan explores the anti-genre elements in Altman's work, showing how he systematically subverts and plays with standard genre expectations. Kagan's analyses are shrewd, but the text is maddening because of his identifying characters both by character first name *and* performer last name. Thus in *McCabe* we get "Mrs. Miller-Christie," and in *Nashville* "Tom-Carradine," as if the character and the performer had committed hyphenate marriage or become some kind of chimera. —E.C.

Manvell, Roger. *Ingmar Bergman: An Appreciation.* New York: Arno, 1980. Originating as a lecture series, Manvell's monograph traces Bergman's work from the early films to *Autumn Sonata.* Emphasis rests on themes, plots and iconography. Filmography, cinematographer credits for Gunnar Fischer and Sven Nykvist, and a key to principal performers. —J.F.

[Movie]. *Max Ophuls and Melodrama.* Source in US: B. deBoer, 113 E. Centre St., Nutley, NJ 07110. $7.50. *Movie* has now evolved into a series of what are essentially books, though this is technically the Summer 1982 issue; this is a 127-page study of Ophuls with contributions by Michael Walker, V. F. Perkins, Deborah Thomas, Douglas Pye, and Andrew Britton, setting Ophuls within the context of melodrama from Griffith to Sirk, Schatzberg, and Rudolph. —E.C.

Richard, Valliere T. *Norman McLaren Manipulator of Movement, The National Film Board Years, 1947–1967.* Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1982. $19.50. An uninspired technical summary of McLaren's work, brief biographical notes on his collaborators, and a brief "history of animation" taken from secondary sources. —E.C.

Simon, William G. *The Films of Jean Vigo.* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981. Simon locates Vigo's four films in European traditions of City Film and avant-garde, then undertakes close analyses of each. *Taris* receives untypical attention; the author finds it subversive of documentary's customary characteristics and values. —J.F.

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Gehring, Wes D. *Leo McCarey and the Comic Anti-Hero in American Film.* New York: Arno, 1980. Gehring considers McCarey's work within the broader context of popular American humor, particularly *New Yorker* writers like Thurber and Benchley. He finds McCarey compared with Capra unfairly to McCarey's disadvantage, although a current reviewing of, say, *You Can't Take it With You* (1938) and *The Awful Truth* (1937) might lead a viewer to other conclusions, at least in the delineation of character. Much is made of McCarey's plot improvisation for *The Awful Truth,* but no mention that it comes from a 1922 play. —J.F.

Hochman, Stanley, ed. *From Quasimodo to Scarlett O'Hara: A National Board of Review Anthology 1920–1940.* New York: Ungar, 1982. $29.95. *From Quasimodo to Scarlett O'Hara* is a silly title for a worthwhile anthology of review essays from the National Board of Review publications, *Exceptional Photoplays* and *The National Board of Review Magazine,* which neither begins with *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* nor ends with *Gone with the Wind.* The reviews by the likes of Otis Ferguson and James Shelley Hamilton are impeccably structured and well considered. The editing unfortunately is not. There is no indication as to in which of the two periodicals the reviews originally appeared, there are no explanatory footnotes and no annotations as to original page, volume or issue numbers. The credits which accompany each review are reprinted exactly and as incompletely as they appeared in the original publication. At least the series of articles by Fritz Lang, Alfred Hitchcock, Max Reinhardt, and others from National Board of Review publications reprinted at the book's close should alert students and scholars to a valuable and little-used source of historical documentation. —ANTHONY SLIDE

Kagan, Norman. *American Skeptic: Robert Altman's Genre-Commentary Films.* Ann Arbor: Pierian Press, 1982. $17.95. Kagan explores the anti-genre elements in Altman's work, showing how he systematically subverts and plays with standard genre expectations. Kagan's analyses are shrewd, but the text is maddening because of his identifying characters both by character first name *and* performer last name. Thus in *McCabe* we get "Mrs. Miller-Christie," and in *Nashville* "Tom-Carradine," as if the character and the performer had committed hyphenate marriage or become some kind of chimera. —E.C.

Manvell, Roger. *Ingmar Bergman: An Appreciation.* New York: Arno, 1980. Originating as a lecture series, Manvell's monograph traces Bergman's work from the early films to *Autumn Sonata.* Emphasis rests on themes, plots and iconography. Filmography, cinematographer credits for Gunnar Fischer and Sven Nykvist, and a key to principal performers. —J.F.

[Movie]. *Max Ophuls and Melodrama.* Source in US: B. deBoer, 113 E. Centre St., Nutley, NJ 07110. $7.50. *Movie* has now evolved into a series of what are essentially books, though this is technically the Summer 1982 issue; this is a 127-page study of Ophuls with contributions by Michael Walker, V. F. Perkins, Deborah Thomas, Douglas Pye, and Andrew Britton, setting Ophuls within the context of melodrama from Griffith to Sirk, Schatzberg, and Rudolph. —E.C.

Richard, Valliere T. *Norman McLaren Manipulator of Movement, The National Film Board Years, 1947–1967.* Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1982. $19.50. An uninspired technical summary of McLaren's work, brief biographical notes on his collaborators, and a brief "history of animation" taken from secondary sources. —E.C.

Simon, William G. *The Films of Jean Vigo.* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981. Simon locates Vigo's four films in European traditions of City Film and avant-garde, then undertakes close analyses of each. *Taris* receives untypical attention; the author finds it subversive of documentary's customary characteristics and values. —J.F.

Stewart, Lucy Ann Liggett. *Ida Lupino as a Film Director, 1949-1953: An Auteur Approach.* New York: Arno, 1980. Stewart concentrates on Lupino's six features preceding her years of TV directing: *Not Wanted; Young Lovers; Outrage; Hard, Fast and Beautiful; The Hitch-Hiker;* and *The Bigamist.* Her measures are technical competence, personal style, and interior meaning. The author finds that Lupino, operating with a strategy of producing good, inexpensive films dealing with serious subjects, made her films skillfully, with an eclectic style. Plots seem dated, images fresh, themes lingering. —J.F.

Genre Studies

THE HOLLYWOOD MUSICAL

By Jane Feuer. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. $22.50 cloth, $7.95 paper.

Since the advent of Pauline Kael and the anti-intellectual approach to popular genres that she has successfully championed, serious writing about the Hollywood musical that wishes to offer anything more than consumer tips, stray bits of gossip or trivial local evaluations —all useful enough services in their own right —has often had to remain doggedly academic in order to be recognized at all. Yet it is one of the rare virtues of Jane Feuer's long-awaited *The Hollywood Musical* that, contrary to the ideological assumptions of the Kaelians and neo-Kaelians, it manages to be rigorously analytical and loads of fun at the same time. And thanks to Feuer's witty style, the intellectual vantage point and the sense of play, far from seeming in any respect contradictory or inappropriate to its subject, work together to mutual advantage—creating, like the musical itself, a high concentration of energy and grace under pressure.

Charles Altman's excellent BFI Reader on the musical, which I reviewed in these pages last year, gave more than one foretaste of this possibility. The paradox is that Feuer herself, for all her capacity to straddle intellectual and entertainment categories, can't quite seem to get over the puritanical all-American bias that there's something slightly improper about it all. Already, in her preface, she's arguing parenthetically that musicals give "the most intense . . . pleasure" to their audience *because* they're "the least intellectualized" of genres—as if cognition were *a priori* an unintense, unpleasurable process. And in a way, it's the very neatness of her overall academic distinctions that allows her to have her cake and eat it too without upsetting the whole dessert trolley—an eventuality she might have had to face if she were a journalistic critic, and had to confront the contradictions of the marketplace more directly.

Her overall thesis, as she herself points out, is built around a "seeming paradox":

> Theories of counter-cinema based purely on abstraction and cognition fail to take adequate account of the power of dominant cinema's appeal to the emotions, an appeal that addresses itself in a systematic manner to basic human needs, albeit in a way which affirms the cultural status quo and forecloses change. . . . Like Cubist paintings, musicals fragment space, multiplying and dividing the human figure into splits, doubles, alter egos. Like post-modern dance, musicals place a premium on an impression of spontaneity, group choreography and a naturalization of technique. Like Godard, musicals employ direct address, multiple and divided characters. Like Fellini, musicals insist on multiple levels of reality and on the continuity between dream images and waking life. Yet the Hollywood musical resembles none of these modernist works. Formally bold, it is culturally the most conservative of genres.

Something of a dialectician, Feuer largely proceeds through antinomies, as a perusal of her section headings quickly reveals: *bricolage* and engineering, the proscenium and "the world outside," and the theme of popular art versus elite art, are three of the central polarities explored. The central focus remains the ideological positioning of the audience performed by musicals, and it is scarcely surprising that Feuer views this as an intricate set of checks and balances that counterpose the musical's dreams of libidinal freedom with all sorts of mystificatory constraints. (In this respect, she might have further noted that, by being academically rather than poetically related to modernism, musicals bear a particularly strong ideological relationship to academic, predigested avant-garde films such as *Riddles of the Sphinx* and *Sigmund Freud's Dora*—works that take great pains not to upset or offend the sensibilities of their prefigured audiences, but strive, on the contrary, to confirm their academic presuppositions.

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From this standpoint, *Riddles* and *Dora* have much more in common with *Mary Poppins* or *Cabaret*—setting aside the whole question of entertainment value—than they do with *L'Age d'or* or *Zéro de Conduite* or *Weekend.* Indeed, their very function is to make certain theoretical notions "hummable"—if not exactly danceable.)

Feuer is especially good in charting various instances of intertextuality in musicals. This is not only a matter of, say, the multiple rip-offs or spinoffs of *Meet Me in St. Louis* (such as *Centennial Summer, State Fair* and *On Moonlight Bay*) or the direct citations of *That's Entertainment,* but also the complex resonances of Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly and Judy Garland (among others) as they develop from film to film, accumulating more and more supplementary meanings en route. Thus in the excellent discussion of Garland which concludes the book, and focuses on many of its preceding issues, the argument is persuasively made that the dramatic structure of *A Star is Born* is largely predicated on extra-filmic matters relating to Garland's past at MGM and elsewhere more than any autonomous interest in Vicki Lester as a character. "The movement from [the film's] opening number to Garland's second number in the film, *The Man That Got Away,* parallels the movement from Garland's MGM persona to her exposure to the public"; and spectators like myself who have always wondered why the dramatic impact of the latter number seems so asymmetrically disproportionate—an unbeatable early peak, rather like the ball sequence in *The Magnificent Ambersons*—are provided with a plausible context for an answer.

Thanks in part to the popular format of the BFI Cinema Series, which is edited by Ed Buscombe—whose only previous volume to date has been Colin MacCabe's *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics,* and whose avowed aim is to popularize difficult and/or unfamiliar work in recent film studies—many of Feuer's best insights are highly compressed, economical without seeming unduly elliptical or aphoristic. The following conclusion to her chapter on "Dream Worlds and Dream Stages" is characteristic:

> Musicals are unparalleled in presenting a vision of human liberation which is profoundly aesthetic. Part of the reason some of us love musicals so passionately is that they give us a glimpse of what it would be like to be free. We desperately need images of liberation in the popular arts. But the musical presents its vision of the unfettered human spirit in a way that forecloses a desire to translate that vision into reality. The Hollywood version of Utopia is entirely solipsistic. In its endless reflexivity the musical can offer only itself, only entertainment as its picture of Utopia. The very terms it set up for itself, however unconsciously, as an apology for mass art, prevented the musical from ever breaking out of its self-imposed hermetic universe.

On the other hand, in a brief consideration of *Nashville* that follows—in a section on "The Evolution of the Audience in the Film"—Feuer succinctly shows how "entertainment indicts its own audience at the risk of losing it." And in the course of clarifying multiple aspects of this paradox, she takes us through a pocket-sized history of her chosen genre that manages to be both fresh and informed, as well as a pleasure to read.

—JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

THE DARK SIDE OF THE SCREEN: FILM NOIR

By Foster Hirsch. San Diego: Barnes, 1981. $14.95.

This large-format book, with its abundance of stills, studiously assembles the basic perspectives on *film noir,* but provides little in the way of new insights. Hirsch's approach is scholarly without being abstruse, and yet he seems more concerned with promoting the academic respectability of his subject than with giving it fresh critical examination.

Hirsch's first chapter, called "The City at Night," dwells at length on two central examples of the genre (*Scarlet Street* and *Double Indemnity*) and concludes with a definition of the genre which is very nearly self-defeating in its expansiveness: "*Film noir* is a descriptive term for the American crime film as it flourished, roughly, from the early forties to the late fifties. It embraces a variety of crime dramas ranging from claustrophobic studies of murder and psychological entrapment to more general treatments of criminal organizations. From stylized versions of the city at night to documentary-like reports of the city at midday, from the investigations of the wry, cynical sleuth to the 'innocent' man momen-

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tarily and fatally trapped by luxury, to the desperate flailings of the confirmed and inveterate criminal, the genre covers a heterogeneous terrain. . . ."

The seven subsequent chapters cover a variety of concerns pertaining to the genre's qualities: literary background, cinematic background, "stylistics," directors, actors, narrative patterns, and the genre's legacy. For literary background, Hirsch focuses on Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, James M. Cain, and Cornell Woolrich—a grouping which perhaps gives a little too much emphasis to the private-eye authors when the Cain-Woolrich "school" is probably more crucial. The chapter on cinematic background ranges, as its subtitle indicates, from (German) expressionism to (Italian) neorealism, though the only thing Hirsch puts in between them is the gangster film genre: he sees *film noir* as diluted expressionism which tends to be less "upbeat" morally than the gangster film and less progressive politically than neorealism. The "noir stylistics" chapter includes groups of stills chosen for their genre motifs (and, somewhat puzzlingly, limits its graphic arts references chiefly to the paintings of Reginald Marsh).

The chapter on directors pointedly excludes some figures (Hawks, Walsh, Ophuls) from Hirsch's occasionally peculiar genre "canon" and then proceeds to auteurist summaries and comparisons of Fritz Lang, Robert Siodmak, Billy Wilder, and Otto Preminger; to notation of *noir* tendencies in Orson Welles's work; to observations on a number of other *noir* directors (including Nicholas Ray, Jules Dassin, Joseph Losey, Joseph H. Lewis, Don Siegel, Phil Karlson); and finally to a *noir*-related survey of Alfred Hitchcock's work. The "Noir Actor" chapter, meanwhile, is less concerned with acting than with roles (esp. for actresses and "character actors") and with screen *personae* (especially for male stars).

Hirsch's chapter on the genre's "narrative patterns" is somewhat misnamed, since it classifies stories in terms of their central character types, but the attention it pays to individual films makes it perhaps the most interesting section of the book. It is also here that Hirsch makes a small case for his claim that *film noir* is an exceptionally challenging genre (by which he means that its characteristic world view is disturbing and dark). After that, the final chapter briefly traces the outlines of a "noir legacy" via genre variations, influences, revivals, and remakes.

All in all, the book is a conscientious, respectable introduction to *film noir*. But serious students of the genre will probably find much more stimulation in E. Ann Kaplan's *Women in Film Noir* (with its more intensely focused analyses) and in Carlos Clarens's *Crime Movies* (which includes *film noir* in its wide-ranging, perceptive mixture of social history and film criticism). —PETER HOGUE

THE J.D. FILMS
Juvenile Delinquency in the Movies

By Mark Thomas McGee and R. J. Robertson. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1982. $15.95.

For a contemporary audience, the chief attraction of the films made during the fifties and sixties that deal with juvenile delinquency is probably their unintentioned humor; because the films claimed "to mirror [teenage] life today, no matter how shocking the revelation" (as one poster declared), they have become time capsules of outdated morals and fashions. Although a few of the films, most notably *Rebel Without a Cause,* overcame the sensational material to communicate the rebelliousness, resentment, and difficulties of growing up, the bulk of the films dwelled on the sex, violence, and drugs that were supposedly a routine part of teenagers' lives.

Since the films were supposed to have been so attuned to their times, studying them could tell us how teenagers were perceived during the fifties and sixties, how teenagers like to see themselves, and how the producers exploited the material. Such a study seems to be McGee and Robertson's aim when they state that they will "study the J.D. films in the context of the cultural events which inspired them." However, rather than study a few archetypal films, the authors record the plot summaries of what seems like every J.D. film ever made, which makes the book more like a catalogue than a critical study. Furthermore, the contexts tend to be glib generalizations of eras; the authors describe the motorcycle films' time period as "draft dodging became a way of life and Canada seemed far more desirable than the jungles of Asia." Although the authors offer

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some ideas about the J.D. films' appeal (they mention the enjoyment of "a vicarious thumb-of-the-nose at adult authority"), those thoughts are not developed.

Ultimately, the authors' stated purpose seems like an afterthought, their main intention being to simply chronicle the films. Thus, the book is limited to J.D. film aficionados who can recall obscure films with the plot summaries. The book may compel others to watch *Hell's Belles* the next time it comes on the late show, but otherwise, it offers too much detail and not enough critical thought to make it worthwhile. —VIVIAN KOENIG

FOR ONE WEEK ONLY
The World of Exploitation Films

By Richard Meyers. New Century Publishers, 1983.

In the mid-fifties the decline of Hollywood's monolithic studio system and the collapse of the Production Code's tidy moral universe gave rise to a bizarre assortment of low-budget, sensationalistic films designed "to tap the basest desires within people to turn them into an audience." Because of the particularly crass way they exploited controversial subject matter, advertising, and their largely teen-age audience, these movies were christened "exploitation films." As a blueprint for film-making, the exploitation strategy has overcome its disreputable origins and marginal status to become part of the mainstream of American cinema. Richard Meyers's *For One Week Only* is a first-rate introduction to the perversely fascinating and immensely lucrative world of the exploitation film; it succeeds totally in its stated purpose "to illuminate and inform about films that almost no one knows about," the kind of instantly disposable "sleaze" that until very recently was seldom screened outside of the Southern drive-in circuit or the decaying venues of the inner city.

Though Meyers's book is very much a fan's labor of love, prolonged exposure to the likes of *Vampire Hookers* (1979), *I Dismember Mama* (1975), *Ilsa, She Wolf of the SS* (1974) has not dulled his critical acumen or his moral sensibility: the dozens of plot summaries he provides are all astute interpretations cognizant of the relevant economic and historical forces. He divides his study into three sections covering "the three major exploitation genres —sex, drugs and rock'n'roll, violence, and horror." Meyers also traces the development of major sub-genres (women in cages, blaxploitation) and interrupts the series of plot descriptions with well-informed discussions of individual film-makers who comprise an exploitation pantheon (Russ Meyer, Herschell Gordon Lewis, Wes Craven, Sean S. Cunningham, and Andy Milligan) or who have graduated to big-budget exploitation work for the major studios (George Romero, David Cronenberg, Tobe Hooper, and John Carpenter, among others.)

An exploitation film's marketing campaign is often the most decisive factor in its box-office success, so Meyers gives due consideration to the manipulative advertising techniques which lure audiences into the theaters. The text is generously illustrated with graphic stills and reproductions of colorful one-sheets complete with outlandish come-on blurbs: "An avalanche of killer worms writhing across the land in a tidal wave of terror!" shrieks the copy for *Squirm* (1976) and the unforgettable teaser for *Last House on the Left* (1972) inquires "Can a movie go too far?" Indeed, Meyers sees such marketing ploys as a defining characteristic of the exploitation film. If you have a sure-fire title like *The Corpse Grinders* (1972) or *Caged Men Plus One Woman* (1972), "actually making the movie is redundant."

Many of the films the author focuses on are the so-called "body count" or "axploitation" pictures that flooded the market in the wake of John Carpenter's mega-hit *Halloween* (1977). A new sophistication in special effects and make-up techniques allowed the most horrendous brutalities to be rendered on screen with stomach-churning accuracy; soon the proliferation of these violent gorefests sparked what Joe McCarty has labeled the "splatter controversy." On a celebrated edition of *Sneak Previews* film critics Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel condemned the motion picture industry for the murderous sexism in *Friday the 13th* (1981) and *I Spit on your Grave* (1981). Meyers rejects the Siskel-Ebert line, and seeks to establish a distinction between the worthwhile blood feasts like *Texas*

some ideas about the J.D. films' appeal (they mention the enjoyment of "a vicarious thumb-of-the-nose at adult authority"), those thoughts are not developed.

Ultimately, the authors' stated purpose seems like an afterthought, their main intention being to simply chronicle the films. Thus, the book is limited to J.D. film aficionados who can recall obscure films with the plot summaries. The book may compel others to watch *Hell's Belles* the next time it comes on the late show, but otherwise, it offers too much detail and not enough critical thought to make it worthwhile. —VIVIAN KOENIG

FOR ONE WEEK ONLY
The World of Exploitation Films

By Richard Meyers. New Century Publishers, 1983.

In the mid-fifties the decline of Hollywood's monolithic studio system and the collapse of the Production Code's tidy moral universe gave rise to a bizarre assortment of low-budget, sensationalistic films designed "to tap the basest desires within people to turn them into an audience." Because of the particularly crass way they exploited controversial subject matter, advertising, and their largely teen-age audience, these movies were christened "exploitation films." As a blueprint for film-making, the exploitation strategy has overcome its disreputable origins and marginal status to become part of the mainstream of American cinema. Richard Meyers's *For One Week Only* is a first-rate introduction to the perversely fascinating and immensely lucrative world of the exploitation film; it succeeds totally in its stated purpose "to illuminate and inform about films that almost no one knows about," the kind of instantly disposable "sleaze" that until very recently was seldom screened outside of the Southern drive-in circuit or the decaying venues of the inner city.

Though Meyers's book is very much a fan's labor of love, prolonged exposure to the likes of *Vampire Hookers* (1979), *I Dismember Mama* (1975), *Ilsa, She Wolf of the SS* (1974) has not dulled his critical acumen or his moral sensibility: the dozens of plot summaries he provides are all astute interpretations cognizant of the relevant economic and historical forces. He divides his study into three sections covering "the three major exploitation genres —sex, drugs and rock'n'roll, violence, and horror." Meyers also traces the development of major sub-genres (women in cages, blaxploitation) and interrupts the series of plot descriptions with well-informed discussions of individual film-makers who comprise an exploitation pantheon (Russ Meyer, Herschell Gordon Lewis, Wes Craven, Sean S. Cunningham, and Andy Milligan) or who have graduated to big-budget exploitation work for the major studios (George Romero, David Cronenberg, Tobe Hooper, and John Carpenter, among others.)

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Chainsaw Massacre (1974) and the morally reprehensible ones like *Maniac* (1981). In discussing *Maniac* (1981), he affirms that "words cannot express the enormously repellent nature of this picture and the amazing abhorrence I have for it," but he is canny enough to realize that such statements can only add to the film's notoriety and hence its box-office returns. Meyers feels that the most practical way of combating the truly loathesome and anti-human films is for the Motion Picture Association of America to redefine its ratings system and award an "X" to movies that are explicitly violent. Overall, however, his attitude to cinematic violence is wry and appreciative because "exploitation films provide a much-needed service; they allow one to receive all the perverted pleasure of looking at a car wreck without the guilt of knowing that the victims are real."

For One Week Only is a worthy successor to, and a valuable update on, Todd McCarthy and Charles Flynn's essential *Kings of the Bs.* Much of the information and virtually all of the illustrations are unavailable elsewhere in book form, and throughout Meyers offers an intelligent perspective on an increasingly important group of contemporary films.

—TOM DOHERTY

Warren, Bill. *Keep Watching the Skies! American Science Fiction Movies of the Fifties.* Volume I, 1950–1957. Jefferson, NC: McFarland. 1982. During the past decade a new breed of film criticism has lumbered onto the scene: the semi-scholarly fan book. Because such books make little distinction between useful research and trivia, their size is often out of proportion to their subject. This volume, the first of two on SF films released in the US between 1950 and 1962, runs to well over 300,000 words—longer than the one-volume version of Sadoul's history of world cinema. "I'd rather err by inclusion than exclusion," writes Warren, as he outlines the plots and gives critiques of such films as *King Dinosaur* and *Voodoo Woman* that he admits are not only bad but also lacking in the frissons or unintentional humor of enjoyable bad films. He also reminisces at repetitive length about his childhood experiences as an SF movie fan. On the positive side, Warren and research associate Bill Thomas have dug up many revealing facts and figures about SF film production. In the preface, especially, Warren presents the wood as well as the trees, pointing out trends in styles, characters, etc., and placing them against a broader historical background. For the better films, he has consulted the scripts and in many cases compared successive versions to good effect. Reliance on scripts occasionally leads him astray, however, as when describing films he hasn't seen. (The appeal of Menzies's ludicrously plotted *The Whip Hand,* for example, lies almost entirely in its visuals, which include some long shots out of Chirico.) In short, Warren's assessment of *Not of This Earth* could apply to his book: "It can never aspire to anything other than B status. But in that genre, it shines."

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Frank, Alan. *The Horror Film Handbook.* Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1982. $24.95. In terms of hard facts on films, this is a compromise between the bare-minimum shock-film-indexes of Naha and Stanley and the data-run-wild compendiums of Lee and Willis. (Yes, the same.) Frank's index alphabetically covers "several hundred key horror movies," and includes their principal cast members and credits, as well as one-to-two-line indications of content and quality, plus quotes from reviews. Strong on stills and design; weak on analysis. With sections on "People" and "Themes" in the genre.

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Parks, Rita. *The Western Hero in Film and Television: Mass Media Mythology.* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982. $39.95. Parks shows how the West, even during its heyday, was aware of its own mythology—ergo, "print the myth!"—and how the development of the Western in subsequent media has been to "demythologize" it and give it more human dimensions. Culling from history, journalistic accounts, and films conventionally called Westerns, she assesses the continued dependency of America on images derived from

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Samuels, Stuart. *Midnight Movies.* New York: Macmillan, 1983. $9.95. Samuels traces the appearance of *El Topo, Night of the Living Dead, The Harder They Come, Reefer Madness, Pink Flamingo, Eraserhead, Harold and Maude,* and *King of Hearts* on the midnight movies circuit. Most of these films might be called not so much counterculture as "anti-culture"; except for the first and also the last two listed above, they share a punkish sensibility and the capacity—rare in our age—to produce genuine shock and outrage among those who hate them, along with genuine adoration among those who love them. They also produce large profits. "Fox was charging theater owners 80 percent of gross receipts. . . . Advertising cost under five hundred dollars a year. Annual gross on *Rocky Horror Picture Show* was $5 million." Samuels provides accounts of their production, usually disastrous openings, and later success.

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History

THE JAPANESE FILM: Art and Industry (Expanded Edition)

By Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982. Paper, $9.95.

Anderson and Richie established themselves in 1959 as the most comprehensive historians of Japanese cinema in a Western language. The book that presented their insights, *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry,* has now been rereleased by Princeton University Press in an "Expanded Edition." It reconfirms their reputation despite the recent attempts at cataloguing and analysis by a host of other Western scholars, such as Noël Burch, Joan Mellen and Richard Tucker.

The "Expanded Edition" offers individual closing essays by the two authors that reveal their diverging interests. Anderson explores at greater depth some of the industrial characteristics that distinguish the cultural history of Japanese films. In three separate, very illuminating studies he discusses the artistry of the silent film narrator or *benshi,* the narrative qualities of the period drama or *jidai-geki,* and two overwhelming influences on the contemporary drama: Universal Studio's early silent melodramas called Bluebird Photoplays, and the Japanese Shōchiku Studio executive who imposed his style on half a century of film, Shirō Kido. In his concern for genre and statistics Anderson provokes thought about phenomena few Western critics have approached, among them the standoff relationship between film and television in the last two decades.

Richie's new contribution picks up from the original edition's biographical appendices on individual directors. He presents the recent significant work of those whose careers were treated in the 1959 edition, and he adds a substantial new list. The previously neglected, such as Kon Ichikawa; the Japanese "nouvelle vague" generation, such as Nagisa Ōshima; and the makers of a very few but nonetheless important films, such as Seijun Suzuki, now all find their appropriate place in the authoritative history. Never failing to evaluate artistic merits, Richie laments the suicidal commercialization of the Japanese film, and elevates one of the sixties generation, Shōhei Imamura, to the rank of potential savior.

The Expanded Edition also provides an extremely useful annotated bibliography in both Japanese, for which Joseph Anderson takes responsibility, and Western languages, for which Donald Richie claims credit.

The frustrations of using this landmark text remain the same as in the original edition, and few of them are the fault of the authors. Many listings in the Japanese-language bibliography and some in the Western languages will prove unavailable except in the authors' private libraries. The factual pronouncements and pithy quotations in the text remain without footnotes—we will always have to wonder where they *really* got their information (except in Anderson's appended essays, where he does use footnotes, but often of the annoying contemporary style that give afterthoughts, asides and musings rather than sources). And most disappointing for Japanese film students, a great number of the films discussed—particularly the prewar films—are long since lost. The authors wrote about them without seeing them, as students arriving in Tokyo armed

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SOUND AND THE CINEMA
The Coming of Sound to the American Film

Edited by Evan William Cameron. Pleasantville, NY: Redgrave,

Combining the well-known, the little-known and the speculative, this anthology began as a 1973 symposium at George Eastman House. To the extent that The Coming of Sound suggests to most of us a time of Hoover and The Coming of Roosevelt, the symposium subtitle with its dates, 1925-1940, may more accurately describe most of the book's focus.

Early on, a Raymond Fielding essay describes technological antecedents and underlines less-remarked aspects of silent and early sound appearances. In the first years of the century, professional acting companies like Humonova, Actologue and Dramatone read and invented dialogue behind the screen to sync with projected performances. In 1929, according to E. A. Sponable, there were 234 different kinds of theater sound equipment in commercial use. Douglas Gomery argues convincingly that during its first, transitional years, the studio system in fact accomplished a smooth and skillful changeover; only the Justice Department cut off a Paramount/Warner's merger.

A series of personal essays follows, more or less useful for their anecdotal inclusions. Early theater sound often suffered from nondirectional RCA speaker systems, hence some popular preference for music over speech. Looping of dialogue became increasingly common after 1935. Capra and Mamoulian simply talk about directing. (Capra improvised; Mamoulian didn't.) In fact, a later piece by Lucy Fischer on *Applause* is more interesting than its director's remarks. Bernard Hermann's indignation strays well beyond the symposium cutoffs (*Fahrenheit 451*, 1967; *Psycho*, 1960), but it speaks thoughtfully about music and the circumstances of the film composer.

Certainly one value of such a collection as Cameron's is its demonstration of different research and critical models as these are applied to common or nearby ground. Where a technological approach finds "chaotic" a fair description for 1926 to the mid-thirties, a corporation study eschews chaos for "smooth, orderly, and extremely profitable." Sometimes a technician, such as James G. Steward who designed Radio City's sound system, appears more sensitive to the movies' esthetic dimensions than the screenwriters and directors. Many stories originate at the Astoria or other New York studios. What might have happened if the talkies had stayed there? —JOHN FELL

BEFORE MICKEY
The Animated Film 1898-1928

By Donald Crafton. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1982. $25.00.

The somewhat unusual object of study of this book might turn some readers away, thinking that it must be something for animation buffs only. Nothing could be further from the truth. Donald Crafton gives a careful and detailed account of the evolution of animation as an art form within the overall institution of cinema while paying close attention to specific film texts and their authors. Crafton has done groundbreaking work in an area of film history which had, for the most part, been left untouched.

The period Crafton deals with encompasses the origins and early developments of animated film. It begins about the time of the Lumières' first presentation and ends before the advent of sound and the widespread success of Walt Disney and Mickey. Crafton is successful in doing away with the popular notion that practically no animation existed "before Mickey."

The main project of the book is to illuminate the development of animated film by a two-pronged examination. First, Crafton surveys many of the authors of early animated films (Emile Cohl, Winsor McCay, John Ran-

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The period Crafton deals with encompasses the origins and early developments of animated film. It begins about the time of the Lumières' first presentation and ends before the advent of sound and the widespread success of Walt Disney and Mickey. Crafton is successful in doing away with the popular notion that practically no animation existed "before Mickey."

The main project of the book is to illuminate the development of animated film by a two-pronged examination. First, Crafton surveys many of the authors of early animated films (Emile Cohl, Winsor McCay, John Ran-

dolph Bray). But this is coupled with an analysis of the development of the art form from a technical and aesthetic point of view. The book thus gives a balanced view between what might be called an auteurism of animation and a broader historical study which takes into account such aspects as the transformation of cartoon strips into animated films or the socioeconomic organization of early animation studios and their place in the overall motion picture industry during this period.

Each one of the major authors studied by Crafton is seen in relation to his evolution as an artist before entering animation. But other elements are discussed as well: specific techniques used by the animators, the kinds of characters they might have developed, and the seemingly overwhelming need to insert themselves within their own work—a phenomenon which raises interesting issues concerning distanciation, self-portraiture, self-reflexive cinema, etc.

Following a discussion of the "major" animators, Crafton also describes the "industrial" model of animation, how, from the individual working almost in isolation, the medium evolved to a full-scale studio system. This section is represented by a discussion of the American animation shops and the manifestations of commercial animation in Europe. Readers will find parallels between this evolution and that of the live-feature industry from cottage industry to assembly-line production system.

Most amusing is the chapter devoted to an analysis of Felix the Cat, a character which is still more attractive than any mouse or space visitor. The creation of Otto Messmer and Pat Sullivan, Felix became a celebrity in the twenties. His popularity extended to marketing of items such as dolls. Crafton carefully traces back the origins of Felix from earlier Messmer cartoons, examines the evolution of the actual animated figure, but does not neglect a study of the character's growth in the popular imagination as well as the economic consequences of this growth.

Before Mickey is a readable, well-informed and serious study of its topic. It is a much needed step away from frivolous "buff" and coffee-table volumes, and in the direction of a strong historical understanding of animated film. —FABRICE ZIOLKOWSKI

HOLLYWOOD'S IMAGE OF THE JEW

By Lester D. Friedman. New York: Ungar, 1982. $8.95.

One of the great ironies of film history is that Hollywood was largely controlled by Jewish executives, was widely populated by Jewish performers and writers, yet generally projected a poor image of Jews (or none at all) while the anti-Semites railed and ranted at Jewish media control.

Lester Friedman traces the origin and development of this great irony and documents the interplay between Jew and Gentile in the great Hollywood dream factory where Hollywood developed its Jewish image and its image of Jews. This volume is an excellent contribution to the literature of film.

Structured chronologically by decades, the book analyzes the Jewish image projected by Hollywood from the earliest turn-of-the-century anti-Semitic shorts through the silent years, the advent of sound, the studio years, and since. Extensive chronologies, film rental sources (for rare as well as common films), and bibliographical entries enrich this volume.

Perhaps the author might have dispensed with precious chapter titles ("The Timid Thirties" and "The Fashionable Forties") but certainly not with his well-documented, fascinating history of that period. The thirties were not timid nor were the forties all that fashionable, although Hollywood producers may have been.

Of particular interest is Friedman's description of the political struggles which lay behind film production from the early thirties through the Cold War era. Those struggles helped formulate Hollywood's image of the Jew. Some organizers of the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League appear later as members of the Hollywood Ten, while isolationist anti-Semites of the thirties become leading anti-Communist, anti-Semitic crusaders of the forties and fifties—US Representative John Rankin, for example. His targets in Hollywood were the same in both anti-Nazi and anti-Communist eras.

Hollywood studios with Jewish executives feared Congressional action on anti-trust issues related to the studios' vertical integration of the industry. Studio executives also feared losing European markets threatened by Hitler and Mussolini. Further, they needed

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But, even more valuable, and even more interesting than this fascinating, well-documented but seldom told history of Hollywood's image of the Jew, are Friedman's trenchant analyses of the cultural interplay between Jew and Gentile on film and in society. In many American communities Hollywood's image of the Jew was the only one available, at least during the first four decades of the century.

Scattered throughout the book, sometimes as introductory passages, sometimes as individual film analyses, sometimes in concluding a section or chapter, Friedman performs considerable service in inter-relating "Jewish" films and *persona* with the culture from which they sprang, which they influenced and which, in turn, influenced them. Explaining that facet of American film history is indeed a valued contribution. —DAN GREENBERG

THE RKO STORY

By Richard B. Jewell and Vernon Harbin. New York: Arlington House, 1982. $35.00.

This is the third in a series of large-scale studio surveys from Arlington House (previous ones, now remaindered, were on MGM and Warner Brothers), falling somewhere between coffee-table book and general reference. On the whole it's a quite useful series, although one might have wished for more thoroughness in the casts and credits in a book which is not likely to be enlarged upon. Every RKO feature is briefly described (including films distributed by RKO, such as the Goldwyn and Disney titles as well as such foreign films as *Rashomon* and the entire schedule of British RKO films like *Victoria the Great*). Alas, the huge library of RKO shorts is ignored, and it is not unreasonable to wish that the overly familiar Disney and Goldwyn titles (which had nothing whatsoever to do with RKO other than the purely business aspect of their distribution contracts) could have been jettisoned in their favor. There also should have been space for RKO's only serial, but on the whole the book is valuable enough to warrant acquisition, though it too will probably be remaindered fairly quickly.

One comment on the film descriptions: they tend to be accurate and reasonable (one can perhaps credit the presence of Mr. Harbin in this regard, for he has been with RKO since 1931, virtually the entire time of the studio's existence!), but the fact that literally *every* film is not only described but evaluated as well leads one to wonder if the authors actually sat down and screened them all and (more to the point) which RKO titles are no longer in existence. This latter question is one the authors would have done well to address, especially since even a cursory reading of the descriptions will lead many people to seek out the more obscure RKO releases, only to find them not listed in either RKO General's 16mm catalog or the various television source directories.

Credits generally don't go beyond director/screenwriters/producers and (oddly) songs. Actors are listed *sans* their roles. There are no running times (a prickly subject). There is a complete index, list of awards, and list of British films distributed only in Britain by RKO (surprisingly lengthy).

—RANDOLPH MAN

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Is that a film wave on the horizon? Several recent features—*Xica, Bye Bye Brazil, Pixote, Eu Te Amo* as well as the more modest *Gaijin* and the earlier *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*—have brought Brazil's film production into international focus again. And "Made in Brazil" means box office, or at least so MGM/UA is betting, with a $3 million investment in the feature film *Gabriela,* starring Sonia Braga.

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It's the right time for this book to appear.

After a long pause when the heady experiments of Cinema Novo were followed by grimly silent years for film-makers under a distrustful military dictatorship, Brazilian film-making is reviving. The military has relaxed censorship rules. The state film agency Embrafilme, which provides funds for about a quarter of Brazilian films and handles distribution, has put together an aggressive U.S. marketing push. And a generation of film-makers that benefits from the Cinema Novo experience is making new movies.

This book provides a historical and aesthetic frame of reference to understand these new efforts. It is not the comprehensive survey the title might suggest, but a collection of essays mostly by Brazilians and North Americans. The anthology was assembled with unusual thought and care, by two academics who include their own articles without false modesty (and none needed). Their indulgences in semiotic references neither hurt nor help the project, which can easily be conceptualized in less specialized terms.

Stam and Johnson focus on the sixties and seventies, stressing the evolution of Cinema Novo (purposefully slighting the larger industry typified by low-quality formulaic light comedies for much of this period) and the development in the last decade of a restructured commercial film industry, in part a reaction to and in part an outgrowth of that film wave. They provide documents and discussion to describe the problems that condition Brazilian cinema.

The major problems of Brazilian cinema reflect the major problems of Brazilian national life: underdevelopment and neocolonialism. A quick browse through the excerpts, especially the historical documents from within the bureaucracy, shows how making movies in a "developing" nation immediately involves economic and political questions.

There is no such thing, in such circumstances, as "art for art's sake"—every film project is also a comment on national culture. If being American means never having to say you're sorry, being Brazilian means always having to say you're Brazilian. One basic question haunts this book: What is an authentic Brazilian cinema? The question is most concrete at the economic level. There is a hard cash problem of finding funds for film in a poor country, and of bucking the clout of international distributors long enough to get national product into moviehouses. In one excerpt, the then-head of Embrafilme argues that for a country like Brazil the only two options for film financing are state backing and international investment. In another excerpt, a heady and angry poem written to Jack Valenti (who at the time was arguing against Brazilian government restrictions on distribution of US films there), film-maker Arnaldo Jabor writes, ". . . like some poisonous milk from the great breast of California/ our TV antennas will drink for years on end/ the colored milk of the most infernal lie yet invented . . ."

Defining the artistic task, both in opposition to Hollywood and in dialogue with a national public, is not easy. As these excerpts reveal, both in their work and in their debates with each other, Brazilian film-makers and film bureaucrats are constantly experimenting with the meaning of the word "popular." Is it enough for a film to be popular at the box office, or must it contain a specifically Brazilian cultural content? Must it, perhaps, carry a political or social message in order to claim a legitimate—not opportunistic or deluding—relationship with the Brazilian people or even "the national reality"? In different periods the experiments have different designs and different results; the wild operatic celebration of Brazilian folklore in a Glauber Rocha film is now art-house stuff, while a film like *Xica,* constructed with trusty genre bricks, lays claim to the populist folklore tradition.

These themes are explored in three hefty sections: one of historical documents, largely written by Brazilian film-makers but including some by critics and film bureaucrats; film reviews; and general essays on themes ranging from music in Glauber Rocha's films to the history of avant-garde, documentary and women's work in film. The first section is the most useful to understanding the conditions limiting Brazilian film-making, and to define the debates that motivate film-makers. The third is the weakest for any purpose. Most of the articles in it should either be longer or shorter, either more comprehensive or less ambitious. The middle part is uneven, with articles ranging from obscure to obvious to brilliant. A couple may be worth the book in themselves, particularly a short piece by essay-

ist Roberto Schwarz on Ruy Guerra's *The Guns*. Examining the tension between the action-filled plot and the seemingly eternal misery of the setting, he describes how the camera's coldly objective eye—participating in an "ethnocentricity of rationality"—sets up a different relationship with the exhausted drought victims and the agents of power. That contrast, he claims, makes immediate and disturbing "the world of plot [history, the possibility of change] and the world of inertia."

Not more than a quarter of all these articles will probably interest any one person, although excellent, succinct introductions make for easy shopping. And there are lapses in the book's assembly. Pictures from the foreign-made *Raoni* were included, for instance, although the film is not even discussed.

But this book goes beyond the "useful for film scholars" standard-issue recommendation, for two reasons. It contains material you won't find elsewhere—and certainly not in English—about a cinema in resurgence. It also helpfully lays out the problems informing filmmaking in many countries working in the shadow of Hollywood.

—PAT AUFDERHEIDE

THE MOVIES IN OUR MIDST
Documents in the Cultural History of Film in America

By Gerald, Mast, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. $37.50.

This is one of the most interesting and useful anthologies in the literature of American film; it is also a profoundly affecting piece of social history. For this long but readable and very well-organized book, Mast has done exemplary archival research and has gathered together over 100 original documents—of which a respectable proportion are reprinted in full—that admirably present the developing attitudes of film-makers, audiences, politicians, courts, economists, churches, critics, sociologists, and even an anthropologist both to the emerging medium and to its relationship with society.

The book is divided into seven sections. "Beginnings" (1882-1900)" deals with the invention of motion pictures and the legal controversies over who invented what. "Nickelodeon (1900-1913)" describes the growth of that industry and presents the first discussions of screen morality, introducing what will turn out to be the dominant theme of this book, the history of screen censorship. "Feature Films and Hollywood (1914-1927)," perhaps the best section of all, is primarily concerned with issues of film content and the rise of Hollywood. "The Talkies (1924-1930)" echoes the opening section with its emphasis on the conversion to sound and the technological and economic aspects of the transition. "The Thirties (1931-1940)" includes the actual 1930 Motion Picture Production Code. "The War Abroad, A War at Home (1941-52)" provides an extremely vivid look at the HUAC witch-hunts, complete with sixty pages of transcripts from the 1947 and 1951-52 hearings, and a detailed examination of the *Miracle* case. The final and, regrettably, weakest section, "Hollywood in the Television Age (1953-1977)" attempts to bring the study up to date.

Aside from the fact that at least half of these materials are unavailable anywhere else and are extremely interesting in their own right, the best thing about this book is that one feels contemporary with each author, sharing his or her perspectives and wondering/forgetting what will come next, so that one understand the complex of issues and may feel, by the end, that some clarification has been arrived at. Though Mast is largely responsible for this sense of completeness and resolution, his attempt has been to allow a history of film "to write itself," and the overall impression is one of accuracy and fairness. There are times when one might wish for a bit more upfront editorial intervention, for instance with some well-placed footnotes that could have sorted out the occasional factual contradictions among (and in) several of the pieces, but what one gets instead is a direct experience of the dialectics of film history, as most of the controversies remain intact and the reader is allowed to share in the historian's dilemma of which sources to rely on and which to distrust. In this selection, the historians of the sixties and seventies come off as no more reliable than those of the twenties

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and thirties, and though this may have been inadvertent on Mast's part (since he appears to have tried to find the most reliable retrospective pieces), it works in the book's favor by declining to convey the impression that film history has now, in our enlightened times, been sorted out once and for all. In general, it is the contemporary—rather than the retrospective—documents that make the most urgent and exciting reading.

The book has obvious classroom potential (once it breaks into paperback) and would be a good text in film history, sociology, etc. More to the point, it is a book that many people who are passionately interested in film will find passionately interesting.

—BRUCE KAWIN

THE JAPANESE MOVIE

By Donald Richie. New York: Kodansha, 1982. $26.00.

This is a luxuriously produced and copiously illustrated volume, and a very readable introduction to Japanese cinema from its beginnings (the coverage in this revised edition includes a brief section on the period from the mid-sixties to date). Richie's account focuses on the social attitudes expressed in the films as Japan's tumultuous modern history unrolled, but he also pays attention to the major directors.

—E.C.

Controversy & Correspondence

To the Editor:

In his article about the lax reviewing of film reference books (*FQ,* Winter 1982–83), Daniel A. Greenberg imputes "cynical acceptance" to me because, in my review of the *Oxford Companion to Film,* I wrote: ". . . it's taken for granted that such a work's publication is a progressive matter, beginning as well as possible and then improving through subsequent printings." (*The New Republic,* August 21 & 28, 1976.) Conveniently to his purpose, Greenberg omits my next sentence: "But I'm concerned that the *OCF* didn't begin as well as it could have done." He also omits the fact that virtually my whole review is a specification of factual errors and dubious opinions in the *OCF.* He is also apparently unaware that, when I reprinted the review in my collection *Before My Eyes* (1980), I added a postscript which concludes: "The book cannot be used with full confidence. A revised edition, which would entail a pretty complete overhaul if it were to make the work reliable, has not been announced."

Some "cynical acceptance"! Greenberg shows an odd notion of scruple in an article indicting others for lax scruples.

—STANLEY KAUFFMANN

Dan Greenberg replies:

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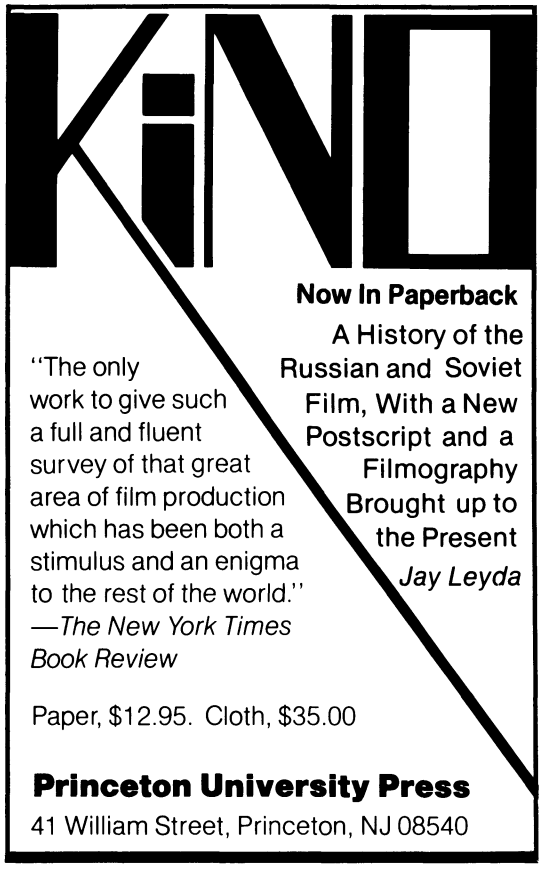

and thirties, and though this may have been inadvertent on Mast's part (since he appears to have tried to find the most reliable retrospective pieces), it works in the book's favor by declining to convey the impression that film history has now, in our enlightened times, been sorted out once and for all. In general, it is the contemporary—rather than the retrospective—documents that make the most urgent and exciting reading.

The book has obvious classroom potential (once it breaks into paperback) and would be a good text in film history, sociology, etc. More to the point, it is a book that many people who are passionately interested in film will find passionately interesting.

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THE JAPANESE MOVIE

By Donald Richie. New York: Kodansha, 1982. $26.00.

This is a luxuriously produced and copiously illustrated volume, and a very readable introduction to Japanese cinema from its beginnings (the coverage in this revised edition includes a brief section on the period from the mid-sixties to date). Richie's account focuses on the social attitudes expressed in the films as Japan's tumultuous modern history unrolled, but he also pays attention to the major directors.

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Controversy & Correspondence

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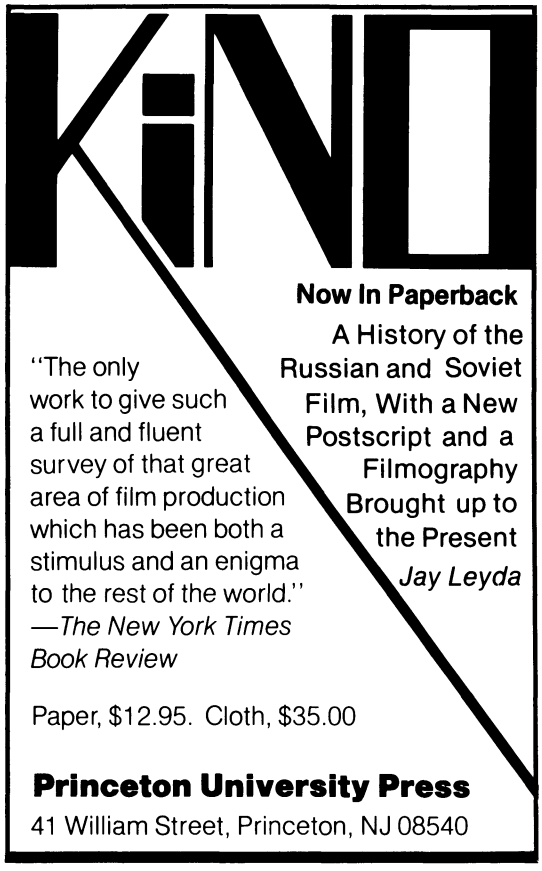

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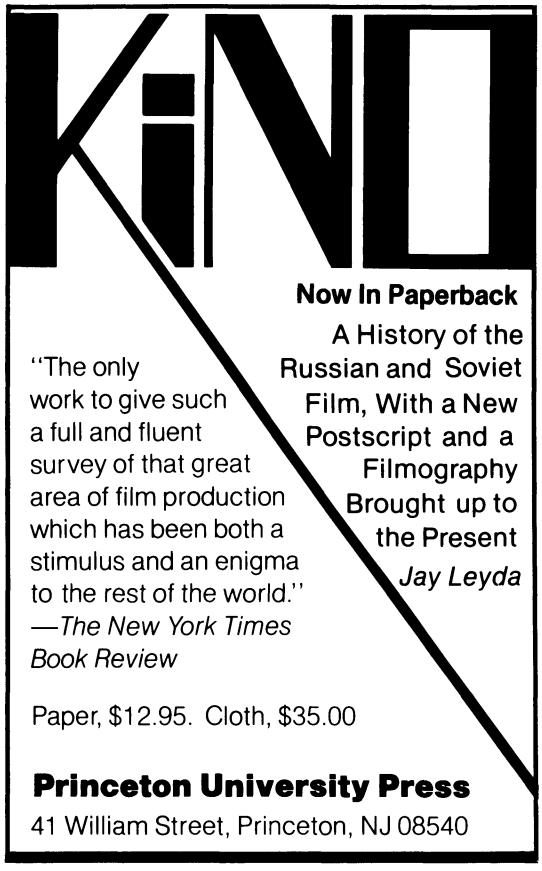

Mexican Cinema

Reflections of a Society 1896–1980

By CARL J. MORA

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